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The Burglar Captain; or, The Fallen Star.

A ROMANCE OF MYSTERY AND CRIME IN NEW YORK FORTY YEARS AGO.

BY PROFESSOR J. H. INGRAHAM

Author of "The Sea Slipper," etc., etc.



STAND BACK, RUFFIANS, BOTH OF YE—ALL OF YE! HE WHO LAYS A HAND UPON THIS YOUNG GIRL IS A DEAD MAN!"

The Burglar Captain; OR, THE FALLEN STAR.

A Romance of Mystery and Crime in New York Forty Years Ago.

BY PROF. J. H. INGRAHAM,
AUTHOR OF "THE SEA SLIPPER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE FUGITIVE.

THERE still stands in New York, not very far from Chatham Square, the remnant, for it can be called nothing more, of an old house, that once was a pretentious mansion, and until late years around it hung an air of respectability, if only on account of its having come down as a relic of the old Dutch dynasty.

The house stood, at the time of which I write nearly half a century ago, with its gable to the street, the entrance being by a narrow court at the side, and which had once been a lawn; but the trees had been cut away by the modern improver, and even then the venerable edifice seemed in the last stages of existence, and the rich land-buyers of the metropolis were impatiently awaiting the death of its owner to get it into their greedy clutches.

This person who stood between them and their desires, was a widow of forty years, and the lineal descendant of its first proprietor, an honest Dutchman who could then sit on his stoops and survey his broad acres that stretched away down to the waters of East river.

Gradually the old Dutch farmer's heirs sold to the spreading city the surrounding acres, until at last the old mansion was narrowed down to a few lots, that descended to an only daughter, who married a young man of dissipated habits, who quickly ran through with her other inheritance, but could not touch the homestead, which had been secured to her and her children.

From bad to worse the husband went, until one night he shot a traveler for his purse, and was sent to prison for life, leaving his sorrowing widow with one son to dwell in the time-worn mansion, and with only her needle-work to keep starvation from her door, for she would not sell the roof that had sheltered her fathers.

Her son, as he grew up, quickly learned the value of the property that was to be his inheritance, and suffered to have his own way soon grew familiar with all the vices of the town, spending the money his too-indulgent mother worked night and day to supply him with.

One autumn evening, after a busy day, the poor widow sat at her work, when she was startled by a hurried step in the little court, and in dashed her son, a tall, well-formed and remarkably handsome youth, with dark hair and large, expressive eyes full of fire.

But his face was now full of alarm, and he was greatly agitated, yet a certain air of recklessness was upon his features, as though in defiance of the very danger he seemed to dread.

"Hide me, mother! I am pursued!" he cried, hastily barring the door behind him.

"Who dares harm you, my son? What have you done?" she cried with pale, anxious face.

"Ask me no questions. The police hounds are after me, and you must secrete me, for they know where I live, and there is no time to lose."

She took him by the arm and hurried him into the front room, once the parlor, but now devoid of all furniture.

On one side of the old tiled mantle-piece was a cupboard, and upon the other what appeared solid wainscoting to match it: this she approached, and, after several efforts, pushed back a panel and exposed a closet by the side of the chimney.

The sound of men's feet were now heard in the yard, and she cried quickly:

"Get in here, Herman: it was made in troublous times for security of life and plate: but oh! that you, my son, should have to hide here from some danger unknown to me."

With an impatient exclamation the fugitive sprang into the dark cavity, and assisted his mother to draw back the sliding panel, and just as it was closed a thundering knock sounded upon the door.

"What do you desire?" asked the trembling woman, endeavoring to calm herself.

"Admittance in the name of the Law," was the answer in a stern voice.

"I will open the door, sir," she said, removing the bar as she spoke: "but who do you seek, coming in this rude manner to a poor widow's house?"

"Your son—if you are Madam De Ruyter," answered the man in a more subdued tone, at her dignified and lady-like manner.

"What has he done?" she asked, scarcely able to conceal her emotion, at the thought that Herman had committed some dreadful crime.

"He has stolen a watch from a gentleman on the street, for he was seen to snatch it and then run."

"I gave chase and saw him enter your gate, and I know he is here and will have him."

"You are at liberty to search the house, sir,"

answered Madam De Ruyter, tottering at the fearful charge against her only child, whom, in spite of his wild ways, she had never believed guilty of real wrong doing.

With a great effort she subdued the emotions of her bleeding heart, and stood aside for the man to enter, and who was followed by another officer, who had just arrived upon the scene.

Carefully they began the search, one going above stairs, the other remaining below; but after a most careful examination of the interior, they met in the entry unsuccessful.

"Frazier," said the first comer, "I am positive the lad is in the house somewhere, but the Devil help me if I know where he is hid."

"I think he must have gone out of the window and over the fence into the next yard," answered the man addressed as Frazier.

"No, the window I tried. It is nailed down—and besides there is no outlet to the yard except through a house on the next street. He is here. I know it," he added in a lower tone, "by his mother's looks. I can read it in her eye."

"Then we had best, one of us, wait here awhile. If he is on the premises we will soon starve him out."

"That is what I think best. You remain, and I will return and report to the police office what has been done. I will see that you are relieved in the morning. Keep a sharp eye about you, and especially upon his mother. The lad is a shrewd dare-devil of a rogue, and I have been looking for an official acquaintance with him for some time."

"I have met him in half the gambling-holes in town, and seen him 'hail fellow, well met,' with old Sing Sing graduates. Well, he has put his finger in, himself, now."

"Did you see him take the watch?"

"No, I was passing on the other side the street when I heard a cry from one of the auction stands in the square, of 'thief,' and 'pick-pocket.' At the same time I saw this young Ruyter flying across the square like an arrow. The moment I set eyes on him I suspected he was the rogue, and set my trotters to work to come up with him. But he ran like a deer."

"That he did. I saw you in pursuit and joined at once, and although I have once ran a race with a horse, a burglar was spurring off upon, and won it, I was distanced by his light heels."

"They are as light as his fingers," said the other officer, with a laugh.

His fellow official laughed back again, and they then separated, one remaining to watch and the other departing to the office to report proceedings.

All this conversation was overheard by Mm. de Ruyter and filled her with the deepest anxiety for the fate of her son. She learned from it more of his true character than she had ever suspected; and the thought that he had become a criminal like his father, pierced her soul. She had brought him up in ignorance of his father's fate, as she supposed, and tried to give him notions of honor and rectitude. But she had signally failed in all her efforts to make him a worthy member of society. He seemed to have inherited his guilty father's moral turpitude of character, and she now saw that he promised to be like him in his future career. It was from some apprehensions and painful misgivings that her son was not all she would have him, that, perhaps, in addition to the motives before given, led her to remain in a state of poverty and firmly refuse to realize by selling, a sum of money which she would not have the firmness to withhold from him, and which she foresaw he would use to his ruin if once in his possession. The words of the officers had been distinctly heard by the youth in his hiding-place. He smiled within himself with reckless contempt of their plan, confident of the security which he enjoyed.

"Sorry I am, madam," said the officer, as he seated himself in a chair in the entry, "to have to intrude myself upon your domestic affairs, but it is in the line of my destiny. We are quite sure your son is in the house!"

"I have given you liberty to search, sir. You have not found him. Can I do more? Do you require more?"

"Only this," he answered, with what he meant to be a humorous smile, "that you will be so kind as to tell me where you have hid him?"

"If I had concealed my son, I should not betray him. You will ask a mother in vain to deliver up her child, though he were guilty of the darkest crimes."

"Well, then I must wait and find him myself. If he is not here at home now, he will be skulking back here during the night, when he thinks all is safe. But you see, mistress, I can't help thinking you know where he is this blessed minute as well as you know where I am! There is always in these old Dutch-built houses, all sorts of nooks and cubbies, and out-of-the-way hiding holes, as if people in old times built their houses to play hide-and-go-seek in. The truth is, I intend, with your leave, to have another search through the old rookery. Have you got a candle?"

"I have none. I am too poor to furnish my house with lights."

"Yes, you look poor enough, I suppose all your furniture wouldn't sell over here in Chatham square, for over six dollars and commission! Yet I hear you refused the other day twenty-two thousand dollars for your old castle Tumble-down and the land it stands on! You must love old houses, mistress?"

This was spoken in a free, easy, almost impudent manner, by the police-officer, who then drew from his pocket a small dark lantern, and examined it to see if there was oil in it.

"There is a drop or two left. It will burn a little while. I can search for him and no thanks to you, mistress!" He then made a light with a match, and after barring the door he entered first the room, in the wainscot of which the fugitive was concealed. He carefully surveyed it; sounding the floor and the wall; opened the closet on the side of the mantle and rapped with the head of his staff against the panel that matched it. It gave a hollow sound, and he paused and examined to see if there way any hinges or signs of a door! Mrs. de Ruyter was standing behind him with all her natural fears expressed in her anxious face, when he suddenly turned round, and threw the light of his lantern upon it. Its eager, earnest look of anxiety and alarm, made him now positive that the fugitive was concealed somewhere in the house and not far distant. He scrutinized the panel of the wall more closely, then bent down to examine the floor beneath his feet, which he repeatedly sounded and made several efforts to pry up, as if he suspected a concealed trap. Mrs. de Ruyter, in the meanwhile, carefully guarded her feelings, for she felt she had nearly betrayed her son's place of refuge by her solicitude for his safety.

After a thorough examination of the wainscoting and floor, to her great relief, as well doubtless, as that of the prisoner within, the officer passed further along, and soon after left the room and proceeded to search the one opposite in the same careful manner; at brief intervals pausing to listen for the sound of the footsteps of any one making an attempt to leave the house.

His search was as thorough in the other parts of the building as it had been in the old parlor. After having traversed every part of the house, he returned to the front entry and set his dark lantern down upon one of the stairs. Mrs. de Ruyter remained in the other room watching him with anxiety, but trying to conceal her feelings from his keen observation. She could not help seeing from his manner that he felt very positive the fugitive had been concealed by her; and she yet trembled for the result.

"Well, marm," he said in a dogged tone, "though I hain't found your boy, I don't mean to give it up. I am morally certain he's not a great ways off where I am now; for when I searched up-stairs and in the back rooms you didn't follow after my steps, but let me go my own way alone; but the minnit I come anywhere about here, you are close at my heels with a look as if you expected me to tread on his toes every step I took. I know from these symptoms he's about here! So I am sure to keep him where he is till I starve him out! Maybe he's up the chimney! I never thought of that!" he cried abruptly; and he at once proceeded into the parlor and thrust his lantern up the open flue. He could see nothing.

"Come down youngster if you are up there!" he called in a very positive tone. "No answer! Well, here is straw in the room! I will try what virtue there is in this!"

He then threw into the fire-place an armful of straw, which was in the corner of the room, and then approaching the lamp to it, again called on the fugitive if he was there to come down. Not receiving any reply, he ignited the straw. It blazed up like powder and the bright crackling flames rushed roaring up the chimney. For a moment he stood appalled, and looked as if he expected to see the body of the lad come tumbling headlong at his feet. He listened to the ascending flames with a pale cheek. The noise increased as they fastened upon the thick inflammable coats of soot enveloping the sides, and then with a loud report which shook the house, they exploded from the chimney, sending up to the spectators without a tall column of red fire into the evening sky. The reflection from the adjoining buildings illumined the old parlor with a lurid glare. The loud shouts of the fire-alarm resounded at the same moment through the narrow street, and men came rushing toward the house from all quarters.

"I have made a muss here, now, that's a fact," said the officer to himself, "but God be thanked I haven't killed the boy. I would rather burn a dozen houses than have had him pitched down here head-first, dead as a herring and looking like a smoked ham! I ought to have thought a bit!"

It was soon ascertained that the fire was confined to the chimney by those who had come to the door. The sensations of the fugitive concealed in the wainscoting, close by the roaring fireplace, were far from agreeable. His first impulse was to dash through the panel and escape. But having a good share of self-possession and courage, he suppressed his fear and waited quietly the issue. To his great relief he soon

ascertained that the house was not on fire: and laughed at the defeat of the officer.

"Now, sir, after having put my house in jeopardy," said Madam de Ruyter, serenely, "I trust you are satisfied and will leave me to myself."

"I am not quite satisfied, marm! I didn't mean to set your chimney a fire, but I'm determined to find that boy out if he is here. I saw him come into this gate as plain as I see you now, and I don't go out of this gate 'till I have his company."

Mm. de Ruyter finding him positive, entered the room opposite that in which Herman was concealed, and seated herself with as much composure as she could, resolved not to retire to bed as long as her son was in such peril. She was too anxious to sleep. She trembled lest, uneasy in his confinement, he might make some restless movement which would be heard by the officer, as only the partition of the entry lay between him and the policeman; as he sat on the front stairs leaning his chin upon his stick. Knowing, too, Herman's impetuous and daring nature, she feared, that weary of his situation, he would become impatient and make an effort to release himself and trust to chance for his escape.

With these feelings of solicitude for the boy, who with all his faults of character, and now a hunted culprit, was so dear to her, she sat watching the officer through the half-open door. With these fears for her son came gradually bolder ones! She caught herself wishing that he would fall asleep on the stairs, and then she began planning a way to secure him, and so give Herman an opportunity of quitting the house. While thus occupied, she was gradually overcome with slumber, and soon sunk into a profound sleep.

The officer, on the contrary, remained wide awake. He did not lose for an instant his diligence. His ears were acute to detect the slightest sound throughout the house. All was still. The faintest noise could now have been heard and would have sounded loud in the stillness. All at once he thought he heard the ticking of a watch! He listened sharply, for the least sound was of moment to the vigilant policeman. It seemed to come from the partition on the side of the entry next to the parlor. He approached his ear to it and it sounded still louder. Then it seemed faint and to change its position, as sounds will be heard in the night.

"That sounded just like a watch ticking. There! I hear it again! I have heard of such things as death-watches! This may be one of 'em! They say they tick to warn folks that somebody is going to die! How clear I hear it now! Now it seems to be in my fob! It is my own watch after all. I believe I am frightened at nothing."

He took out a large silver turnip-shaped time-piece and held it to his ear.

"Yes it sounded precisely like it. It was my watch. No, I hear the other. I'll settle the matter and see which it is."

And opening the case of his watch he stopped it with his finger, and laying it on the stairs by his side, he listened. The same strong, distinct ticking from the partition, which had first arrested his ear, he now plainly heard. He was satisfied that it was not his own watch that he heard, for putting his ear to that, he found it perfectly still.

"I will find this matter out. If it is a death-watch I would like to see one. If it is any one's death it foretells it is that of this young jackanapes by a short halter."

He took up the dark lantern and began to examine the partition for the insect. He could discover nothing; yet it was clear to him that there was one place on the partition where he could hear it more distinctly than on any other. This part he scrutinized closely with his eyes, and even rubbed his hand over it in every direction; yet the incessant ticking continued.

Suddenly a thought flashed upon his mind. "I have it," he said with a smile of quiet triumph. "That is no death-watch, or I am no sinner. If it is not the watch the young rogue picked the gentleman's pocket of, then may I have my pockets picked by a monkey in kids. That is the watch I hear. It is here in this partition. And it's my public opinion privately expressed that the chap what prigged it isn't far off from it neither. Hark! I hear something beside the ticking. It is breathing like some one asleep. It isn't the old lady either, for I hear her also. The game is up for you, Master Herman. If he is in here he got in some way, and I must find how. I will work softly, lest I wake his mother and have her upon me before I secure him with a pair of bracelets on his wrists."

Thus speaking, the police-officer raised the dark lantern, and began carefully to make survey of the mysterious partition.

CHAPTER II.

THE ARREST AND WHAT FOLLOWED.

THE search of the officer to obtain admission by some secret opening within the partition was unsuccessful. He could still hear the incessant ticking of the watch, and when he lis-

tened attentively he could clearly discern the low breathing, as if some one was sleeping behind the panel.

"Well, there is no use in my smelling about here like a hound about a woodchuck's hole," he said, in a half-vexed tone, "I may as well go to work and tear down this partition. All these old panels are firm as a rock, and if he got in here through these it takes sharper eyes than mine to find the place. Let me try the panels in the room on the other side; for if there is a cubby hole here the entrance may be in that room as well as from the entry."

He then entered the old parlor and began to try the panels on the left of the fire-place. One of them he discovered to be a little loose. This encouraged him, and after working it now up, and now down, now pushing now drawing, he succeeded in starting it from its fastening, when it flew back into the wall, revealing the cavity within.

"Ha, my beauty! I have got you at last, hey?" as Herman, waking from a sound nap into which he had fallen, by the noise of the panel and the glare of the lantern, sprung to his feet.

He at once recognized the well-known police officer, Jack Stetson, and at once saw and comprehended his situation. Quick as thought he dashed the dark-lantern from the officer's grasp with one hand, and struck the other into his face. As the officer gave back a little he sprung out into the room and made an attempt to escape by the door. But Stetson instantly recovered himself, and threw his body against the door. The room was perfectly dark. Finding his chance of escape thus cut off, the fugitive taking advantage of the darkness, remained perfectly still. Stetson did not know in what part of the room he was, and placed himself in in a sort of pugilistic attitude, as if momentarily expecting an unseen attack from him. He at the same time was listening to detect his whereabouts. Herman finding himself temporarily secure in the darkness, paused to decide what course to take. At length he resolved to steal noiselessly along the side of the room toward the chimney, and endeavored to escape up the flue by a bold *coup de main*.

He moved as noiselessly as a cat. But in vain were all his precautions. Stetson had detected the ticking of the watch, and was as noiselessly moving in the direction in which he heard it. As he advanced he was aware that the ticking was receding and that the fugitive must be in motion. He listened an instant to ascertain accurately the direction of the sound, and then made a bold dash across the room. The next moment he had the shoulder of the young culprit in his vise-like grasp.

"Ah, my cove, I have you now!" he cried, with exultation. Herman made no other rejoinder, but by a well-aimed blow at his features, which, coming in the dark and unexpected, staggered the officer, and he now lost his hold. But recovering himself, he proceeded to secure the arms of the youth, by pinning them by his side with his own, and then tripping him up and tumbling him upon the floor. Herman fought with the energy of despair, but the strength of his opponent overpowered him, and he lay beneath him panting and cursing. The noise of the scuffle awakened Mrs. de Ruyter, who came to the doorway and in alarm called upon her son's name, for she could hear nothing but his muttered breathing and an occasional oath from the officer as he was fastening a pair of handcuffs on his wrists in the dark.

"I am in for it, mother!" he said, as the officer let him rise to his feet, having secured his hands. "But if I had my right hand free with a knife in it, I should tell another story!"

"Oh, Herman! that you should ever have come to this!" she cried, wringing her hands.

"I but follow in the footsteps of my honored father," he answered, recklessly.

"And you then know his crimes?" she exclaimed, in a tone of anguish.

"I have known, mother, that he went to State's prison for shooting a traveler for his purse," answered the youth, with a laugh. "I knew this as early as I was able to know any thing. There were lads enough, and men, too, to pour this into my ear either in revenge or to tempt me to do evil with them. So when I knew of what blood I came, I thought I would try to be worthy of my father's name! The knowledge of what my father was made me reckless! What had the son of a felon to do with living honestly? No, no, mother! My father's friends found me out, and so here I am with a pair of bracelets on my wrists."

"Can it be possible my boy has been so depraved?" she exclaimed.

"There don't seem to be so much doubt about that, mistress," said Stetson, bluntly; "he is a chip of the old block, and will do his father a credit for that matter. I have had my eye on him this year past, and expected to have the satisfaction of putting the ribbons upon him. Come, my young lifter, turn over that watch you stole! And the next time you lift a watch and play hide-and-go-seek with it about you, take Jack Stetson's advice and put a stopper on its tongue. If I hadn't heard it ticking through the partition, d— me! I should never have found you! It helped me afterward to find

your whereabouts in the dark. Come, hand it over carefully."

"The devil confound the watch," cried Herman, taking it from his pantaloons pocket and with a terrible oath dashing it across the room against the wall. It struck the plastering, and was shivered to pieces.

"You are a nice young man," answered Stetson, in a firm tone. "I see I must take good care of you! Come now with me to the police office. I will have you taken tender care of."

"You will not carry my boy to prison?" cried Mrs. de Ruyter, who had made her way across the room to her son and was now clinging to his neck.

"No, marm—I mean he shall walk! Come, youngster!"

"Quit that blarney, mother. I am not a baby that you should go to crying over me in this style. Go ahead, Stetson!"

"You are a prime one!"

"Herman!" cried his mother, following him in agony of grief. "Herman, kiss me before you go! Tell me, Mr. Officer, where you are going to take my poor boy?"

"To the lock-up! From there he will probably go the island for six months."

"I wish you would let me go, mother," said the young pickpocket, impatiently; "I shall be out soon and snap my fingers in the face of this same officer. I'll be home again in a few days, never you fear!"

"I think you will find it won't be quite so easy, master, to be home again as you think for, if I once get you safely locked up. Here, mistress, please take this match and light my dark-lantern; I want to pick up the pieces of the watch this young scapegrace has smashed."

"Fiends take the watch. I was outwitted there, Jack."

"You are familiar for a youngster of your inches, I say."

"Quite so! I trust we shall know each other better before we part."

"Bless me! If you are not an amiable young man. Your mother'll know you are out; that's one comfort."

"And you'll know I'm out too. I don't mean to stay locked up for anybody. Good-by, mother."

"Don't be in a hurry. Can't you wait till I get the pieces? Here's a light now. Well, this is what I consider a regular smash," he added, as, holding on to Herman's arm, he stooped to pick up the pieces of the watch. The bold, daring, handsome face of the lad, as seen by the light of the lantern, betrayed a recklessness of feeling in perfect keeping with the language he had been making use of. Its expression was fearless and careless of consequences. For an instant, as the officer stooped to pick up the battered case of the watch, his dark eye lighted up, and he raised his arm with a movement as if he would have struck him to the floor with his manacles; but the quick, vigilant eye of the officer detected the incipient motion, and he sprung to an erect position, at the same time giving him a glance that told him he perfectly understood his kind intention toward him.

The officer, having got ready, now passed his arm beneath the left arm of his prisoner, and said briefly and professionally:

"Come, my cove."

"One embrace, Herman," cried Mrs. de Ruyter, who was ready to sink with emotion. And she threw her arms around him. "I will go, too. I cannot be separated from my poor boy."

"You had better stay here, mother. I shall be back in a few days. They can't hurt me."

"I will go and see the judge in the morning, Herman. He will listen to the petition of a mother for her only child."

"If you come there crying for me, mother, I shall be ashamed of you. I wouldn't accept my liberty obtained by a woman's tears. I am willing to take the consequences of what I have done; and I don't want anybody to intercede for me. Stay at home, mother, and by and by I will pay you a visit between two days."

"I'll see to that," said Stetson, as he passed out of the front door. "Good-night, mistress."

"Good-night, mother," added the boy, boldly, and yet evidently feeling for her beneath all this outward air of recklessness.

They passed through the little yard to the street, and she heard their retiring footsteps as they died away in the distance. The poor mother then re-entered her desolate threshold, and casting herself upon her wretched bed, gave way to a paroxysm of tears, such only as a mother's heart can pour forth at such a time.

In one brief hour, all her hopes of bringing up her son in an honest career were wrecked. She had early tried to guide him in the way of honor and truth, and although she could not conceal from herself that he was wild, thoughtless and disobedient, she never believed that he could be guilty of anything criminal. She thought him only wild and vicious. Carefully she concealed from him his father's infamy, and led him to believe that he had died many years before. But the crime for which he had been doomed to imprisonment for life, had been too public to be kept from the son, who mingled freely with the lads of the streets. He early

learned his father's guilt and imprisonment; and this knowledge was the secret of his own depravity; for nature had made him noble in heart, and generous and humble in spirit. Proud of his ancient family name, for his maternal ancestors had been noble in Europe, and in this country his forefathers had been distinguished by high offices under government, he grew up to the age of ten years with all the feelings of a high-minded, generous lad, who fears dishonor and scorns meanness and vice. His handsome face and fearless eye were the true manifestations of his heart and character. Up to this time he knew nothing of his father's guilt, for when he was imprisoned he was too young to know the circumstances, and with a jealous care had his mother kept the knowledge from him, never allowing him for a moment to go out of her sight, but keeping him with watchful fear close by her side; so that no cruel tongue might ever breathe into his young ear the shameful tale. So he reached his thirteenth year, filled with the spirit of honor, and a love of truth and virtue, which, with more than ordinary care, his mother had instilled into his young heart.

One day his mother was ill, and she sent him to an apothecary's near by for some medicine. It was almost the first time he had gone abroad since his father's arrest. She gave him careful instructions not to linger by the way, or speak with any one; for she trembled lest by some means the fearful tale she so faithfully guarded might reach him.

On his return from the apothecary's, as he was passing a stand where a lame hunchbacked man sold prints, a couple of lads taking advantage of his lameness and consequent inability to pursue them were parading up and down before him, mocking his deformity, and nicknaming him "Mr. Droomedary." The cripple was foaming with rage, and attempted to chastise them; but every effort he would make to reach them with his crutch, they would run off and ridicule his impotency.

This conduct at once filled the generous bosom of young Herman with indignant feelings. As he came up with the stand he said, firmly and reprovingly, though the boys were both two or three years older than himself:

"Shame on you, for insulting a poor man in this way. You deserve to be flogged handsomely for it; and if I was large enough, I would not hesitate to chastise you both."

They looked at him with surprise and contempt; and one of them with an expression of derision retorted:

"I guess you had better try it now, youngster; you can't very well wait for your little worship to grow!" and he enforced his invitation by approaching Herman and thrusting his ugly fist within two inches of his eyes.

Quicker than thought, Herman planted a severe blow in the face of the boy, and he reeled and fell into the gutter. His companion then came up and began to rain a shower of blows upon Herman, who stood his ground and returned them with good will. The first assailant now recovered his feet and also set upon him. Unable to withstand this combined attack, he was driven backward—fell over a box which contained fruit belonging to the cripple. Instantly both boys were upon him, and were proceeding to beat him in the face and breast without mercy, when the hunchback making a leap with his crutch over his table, which he upset, scattering his apples in every direction, began to rain down blows with such good will with his staff, that they cried for mercy, and tried to get out of the way of the incensed man by rolling over and over. They finally escaped beyond his reach, though thoroughly belabored. Herman sprung to his feet and warmly thanked the hunchback, who in his turn would take no merit, telling Herman that he had got into the contest by taking his part, and that he should never forget him for his goodness of heart in standing up in his defense.

"A cripple," he said, with strong emotion, "never forgives allusion to his misfortune, nor forgets an insult which touches upon his deformity. And as little does he ever forget him who protects his feelings from injury. I shall never forget you, my boy."

"Come on, scape-gallows. Come out here, where we can have a fair field, and we'll show you game," cried one of the beaten boys from the opposite side of the way.

"How's your father?" cried the other boy; "when you write to him ask him how he likes hammering stone, and give my love to him."

"Wouldn't you like to take a purse or two on the avenue?" called out the first boy, in a loud, sneering tone. "Look out there, Mr. Droomedary, he'll be into your money-box."

"Or shoot you with a pistol and then rob you," cried the other. "His father knew the trick."

"What can these boys mean?" asked Herman, turning to the hunchback, who was picking up his apples.

"Don't mind 'em! they are only slurring your father. They are afraid of you, and dare not do anything else."

"My father? And what do they say of my father?"

"Only about his being at Sing Sing. Don't mind it. You must expect this, you know."

"Sing-Sing," repeated Herman, bewildered and confounded. "Is not Sing-Sing a prison?"

"Why, yes; you knew your father was there, didn't you?" asked the hunchback, in surprise.

"No, my father is dead; my mother said he died away from home."

"Then she never told you. What a pity you ever should have known it. Devil take these young scoundrels," he cried, with indignant emotion.

Herman had heard too much for him to remain silent. He put question after question to the man, who by degrees gave him the whole dark tale of his father's infamy; of his own disgrace. When the hunchback had told him all, which he did with great reluctance, and with as much delicacy as he could, Herman stood like one petrified. He did not doubt the truth of what had been told him. But the intelligence overwhelmed his spirit. His heart swelled with emotion, and yet he would not weep. His eyes were fixed cold and hard upon the face of the hunchback, who expected each moment to see him fall down with convulsiveness. But Herman restrained his feelings, and after a few moments suppressed all outward emotion.

"I thank you, sir," he said, taking the hunchback by the hand, his voice scarcely articulating the sounds for trembling.

"Poor boy, never mind it, it won't hurt you. I would rather have been mocked all day by all the ruffian boys in New York than this should have been brought about."

"I should have heard it some time or other. You have done me a kindness in telling me all this."

The boys were still on the other side of the way waiting for him. He turned away from the man, and with a face deadly pale, a compressed lip, and an eye dark, and almost fierce in its expression, he crossed the street toward his house. He came near his late antagonists, who stood watching his advance. They clenched their fists and awaited him, filling up the narrow walk. With a firm, stern tread, a flashing eye, and a look of fierce defiance he approached them. His fist was not clenched; nor was his bearing like that of one about to encounter a hostile party; but steadily he walked right onward as if they were not in his path. Nearer and nearer he came, and intimidated by his bearing, they gave way step by step, and separating, gave him room to pass by. He passed between them neither looking to the right nor left, as if he saw them not. They made no attempt to detain him; no gesture to assail him. After he had gone they looked after him, and then at each other with glances of surprise and confusion.

This conduct on Herman's part shows strongly the depth and energy of the feelings which had taken possession of his bosom, on hearing the relation of his father's crime, and from that moment there passed over him a fearful change. At one stroke he shivered the shield of honor his mother had thrown across his heart, and the spirit of reckless career took possession of his soul. From his mother he carefully kept concealed the terrible knowledge he had obtained; but she could not fail to discern the change that had come over him. He was no longer docile, submissive, gentle. He no longer passed his hours with her. Day after day he absented himself from her, and even nights found him a wanderer from the maternal roof. With a soul of desperate feeling he sought out the haunts of vice, and herded himself with the criminal and guilty. He was not long in falling in with persons of this class, who had not only known his father when in prison, but had been his former companions. Among these he became a favorite; and from his intelligence became a sort of confidant in their schemes of villainy. He was a favorite with old hardened criminals, who took delight in instructing him in all the mysteries of their dangerous pursuits. But up to the time of his arrest he had never been guilty of any act of crime on his own account; and only undertook this to supply himself with means to bribe the under keeper of the city prison to release from confinement one of his old associates, who had been taken a few days before. The unfortunate result to himself of this effort in behalf of his friend, has already been made known. The sentence he received on conviction was eight months imprisonment on Blackwell's Island. His mother's tears and prayers had been offered in vain to obtain his pardon. She returned to her lonely dwelling and gave herself up to sorrow and despair. It was on the night of the fourth day after he had been conveyed to Blackwell's that she was seated in her desolate room moaning over her wretchedness. There was a wild tempest howling without and the rain dashed heavily against the window panes. Suddenly a sharp rap upon the glass startled her; and by the faint glimmer of a piece of candle she saw a face pressed against the glass. Fear first took possession of her bosom, then she believed she recognized the features of Herman. She stood irresolute, when he knocked again and spoke in a deep suppressed voice:

"Unbar the door, mother, and let me in."

She recognized his voice and with a glad cry flew to the door. With trembling hands she removed the bar, and the door was blown wide open. Amid the rushing of the rain and the roaring of the wind, Herman sprung into the passage, having in his arms a young girl of nine or ten years of age.

CHAPTER III.

A MYSTERY.

WHEN Madam de Ruyter, at a gesture from her son, had closed and barred the door, she gazed upon him and his lovely burden with the most intense surprise. Herman, having satisfied himself that he was temporarily secure within the house, placed the little girl in his mother's large arm-chair and then turning from her said in a quick, peremptory tone:

"Look at her and see if you can't bring her to before she goes off entirely."

"Who is she, Herman?"

"Don't ask me any questions. Try and do something for her."

"How is it that you are here? I am amazed to see you, and coming too, with this child in your arms amid this storm. Where are you from? How have you escaped, my son? Why did you bring her here?"

"Mother! do you see she is almost lifeless?" cried the youth, impatiently. "Bring her to, and I will then talk with you!"

Madam de Ruyter knowing well the impetuous and determined character of her son, made no reply to him; but approaching the arm-chair stood a moment gazing with a look of pity, tenderness, and curiosity, upon the little stranger, who had been so singularly brought beneath her roof.

The child was, as we have said, about nine or ten years of age, one of those slight, elegant persons which are supposed to belong only to the purest lineage. Her dress, which although wet with rain was seen to be a richly wrought white muslin frock, with small neat French slippers, showed that she belonged to a class in which Herman had no associates. Her soft brown hair flowed about her neck in the richest tresses which were now saturated with the pitiless rain to which she had been exposed without. These particulars were first observed by Madam de Ruyter as she gazed upon her, and not a little enhanced her surprise and curiosity to learn in what manner and for what object Herman had got possession of this lovely child and brought her with him, especially under circumstances when it would be supposed he would have as much as he could do to look after himself and provide means for his own safety.

Her glance next rested earnestly upon the face of the child with deepening interest. It was pale and lay with one cheek resting upon the bare round shoulder, the eyelids partly closed, the soft pretty lips parted, and presenting a sight singularly lovely and touching. She was surprised at the delicacy and refinement of the features; the chiseled finish of the profile; the exquisite perfection of every lineament.

"Mother, will you do nothing? Why do you stand there?" demanded Herman, impatiently.

"Where have you taken up this sweet child?" she demanded firmly.

"I will answer no questions till I know she is not going to perish!"

"She will soon revive," answered Madam de Ruyter, taking the small white hand of the little stranger in hers, and holding it a moment between her palms. "It is warm, and the pulse is throbbing. It is fear that has made her insensible. You have done some great wrong in this matter, I fear, Herman!"

The lad made no reply. He stood still a few feet from the chair, gazing upon the face of the child with a feeling of deep anxiety and tenderness. His mother proceeded to use all the usual means to restore her. Herman remained standing, looking on. Suddenly a loud noise made him start, and he made three steps with an instinctive impulse of flight. He paused and listened in this attitude an instant, and then, as if despising his own fears, he said with a laugh: "I am a coward, mother. It was but a shutter, got loose from its fastenings, slamming in the storm that roars without. I shouldn't wonder if the old rookery came down about our ears. Its timbers creak and groan as if they had sympathy with the uproar of the winds without and wanted to go flying in pieces through the hurricane. Hark!"

The sound that now startled him, and in spite of his courage made him turn pale, was a heavy fall upon the floor, followed by a loud tumbling noise of bricks rolling from it, and then plunging to the ground, falling beneath the windows of the room with an appalling crash. Madame de Ruyter clasped her hands together, and instantly threw her body over the lovely child as if to protect it.

"It is the old Dutch turret on top of the chimney. This uproar is enough to make the devil start," said Herman. "But let it blow so long as the house stands. No policeman will venture out to-night. There she moves and breathes heavily. See her eyes open. She will live," he cried with joy. "Now, mother, take her before she knows where she is and place her

in your bed. She will soon go to sleep, and then I will tell you how I came by her."

Before the child revived to entire consciousness and wakefulness, Madam de Ruyter took her in her arms and bore her to her bed. Here she gently disrobed her of her wet garments, and wrapping her warmly in a dry robe of her own, she laid her head upon the pillow, trusting that in a few minutes she would pass away into the deep sleep which often follows the temporary suspension of the senses. But the child, after a moment's quiet sighed heavily, threw suddenly wide open her large blue eyes and stared with a strange look of mingled curiosity and alarm upon the grave yet benevolent face which bent over her.

"Sleep, my sweet child," said Madam de Ruyter, in the gentlest tone she could assume, seeing the alarmed gaze of the deep blue orbs, which were fixed so startlingly and inquiringly upon her.

"Who is it? 'Tis not old Anny! Where am I?" she cried in sweet yet greatly terrified tones, looking round wildly upon the dim apartment, and then again fixing her eyes upon Madam de Ruyter with that look of fear which children fix upon strangers.

"I am not Anny, dear. But will try and be as good and kind to you. Sleep, my sweet child!"

"I cannot sleep. I want my father. Call my dear father. Anny! Where is Anny? Where is my father? How came I here? Who are you?"

While the child, sitting up in the bed, was putting these rapid questions, suggested by the most acute terror at finding herself in a strange place with a face wholly unknown to her bending over her, Herman, who could not conceal his gratification at her revival, carefully kept in the shadow of the room so as to be wholly unseen by her; yet at the same time he watched her face with a look strangely compounded of pity and satisfaction.

"Your father shall come soon, Anny you shall soon see, my sweet child," said Madam de Ruyter. "Lie down a few moments. Try and compose yourself. You shall see your father."

"Shall I see him?" she asked, smiling through her tears, which flowed from her full eyes. "You look kind and speak kind though you are not Anny. But tell me where I am? Why I am here?"

"You shall know all in time. Be tranquil my child and when you awake you shall know all!" said Madam de Ruyter, moved even to tears.

"Shall I see my father? Will you take me to him?" she cried, taking her hands and folding them in her own dimpled ones and gazing into her face with that eloquent earnestness which would read the truth in the very soul.

"I promise it, my child," answered Madam de Ruyter with a firmness which carried conviction to her mind, suspicious and alarmed as it was.

"Then I will sleep. Will you watch by me? This is a dark and dreary place. Do not leave and I will try to sleep because after I have slept you promise me I shall see my father."

"When the storm is over you shall see him and all you love! Do not fear! I would take you to him now but for the tempest which rages without!"

"The storm!" she repeated, enlarging the breadth of her blue eyes as if remembering the past, and then shrinking as if for the first time hearing the roar of the driving blast; "yes it did storm! and is this the same storm? Oh! I know! I know," she suddenly cried in the most agonizing accents! "I was taken away in this storm! Oh! that dark, horrible man! And am I now in his power? Has he brought me here? I shrieked! I shrieked! and no one came! and yet it seems to me I was taken from him by some who had a voice I knew! Oh, where, where have I been brought? Why have I been torn from my father? Why am I brought here? Tell me! Tell me! Save me! Save me!"

"Here my poor child you are perfectly safe. I will protect you! No one shall injure you. I will be a mother to you. In the morning I will myself conduct you to your father. This is my house. You are lying on my bed. Be composed and sleep. You are here in safety whatever may have been the circumstances which have torn you from your home! Believe my words and trust me!"

"You look kind and good. I will believe you. Only save me from that horrible man!"

"Man?" repeated Madam de Ruyter; for she had once before heard her use this word, but supposing it was applied by accident to Herman, she let it pass from her mind; but now the repetition of it showed her that she could not mean Herman; and this idea gave her relief while it increased her desire to get to the bottom of the mysterious affair.

"Oh, yes, a man! He was large and very ferocious, and told me he would kill me if I made any noise, yet I did not cease to shriek till he pressed his hand upon my mouth! You will save me from him!"

"You are safe, I repeat, poor dear child!"

"Then I will be quiet; I feel as if I would like to sleep! My eyes are very heavy. Then I will sleep. My eyelids are so very full of sleep, I

can't keep them from falling down upon my cheeks every minute. I am glad I can sleep with you by the bed! You will stay with me?"

Madam de Ruyter was deeply moved by the eloquent earnestness of the sweet stranger, and bending over kissed her tenderly.

"Then I will be tranquil. I must not forget my mother's prayer," she said softly, with an effort keeping her eyes open to lift them heavenward. She whispered a few slumbering words—drew a small crucifix from her bosom, pressed it upon her lips, and there it remained, for she was already asleep.

Madam de Ruyter gazed upon her with the most touching sensibility. Her heart was overflowing.

"Angelic child! There, like a seal from Heaven, lies the little cross upon the lips of innocence, thy rosy fingers too heavy with the weight of the sleep upon thy senses to lift it to return it to thy bosom."

"Mother, she sleeps!" said Herman noiselessly approaching from the shadows which had obscured his person and standing near the bedside.

"She sleeps, Herman. Oh, my son, my son! What is this fearful crime of which you have been guilty? How came you by this sweet, terrified child? She sobs even in her sleep! See her little breast heave like a young bird's stolen from its nest! Whence have you taken this trembling dove?"

Madam de Ruyter spoke with sadness and yet with a firmness of tone and air that became the circumstances. Herman looked steadily upon the face of the sleeper but made no reply, though it was plain he had heard and noted the questions of his mother. He was gazing upon the young girl with looks of pride and gentleness; as a truant boy regards a snow-white rabbit or a beautiful squirrel he has been so fortunate as to make captive. Herman's dark, handsome Gipsy face was lighted up with animation and feeling as, standing close by her pillow, he watched that of the sleeper, his arms folded in his ragged jacket, his black hair wildly cast about his brow, his feet bare and stained with blood, but his fine athletic person drawn to its full height with a proud independent carriage which singularly became his bold style of head.

"Herman," repeated Madam de Ruyter in a less severe tone, for she could not help a feeling of maternal pride arise in her bosom as she regarded him as he stood before her as we have described his attitude. "Herman, tell me all. What means this strange return with such a companion? You have escaped from prison you say. God bless you! for you are mine bond and free! And if you seek my protection it is yours, even with my life, Herman! But tell me all, and how you came to bring this angel here?"

"She is an angel!" repeated the lad firmly and with something like pride and tenderness in his tones. As he answered thus he knelt at the bedside and bending reverently over pressed his lips with passionate reverence upon the right hand of the fair sleeper which still held the little silver cross upon her lips. His mother regarded him with wonder and admiration. A new and lofty spirit seemed to have animated him unknown to her before. He remained a few moments kneeling by her pillow and then suddenly rising to his feet, faced his mother, and said in a quick tone, habitual to him when excited:

"I have news to tell you that will make you tremble. But first let me speak of my escape and why I am here. I love you, mother," he added, taking her hand and leaning upon her shoulder, "and you shall always find me true to you."

His first abrupt words caused her to tremble, indeed, in anticipation of the evil tidings of which he announced himself the bearer: but returning his embrace she prepared to hear with calmness what he had to say.

CHAPTER IV.

A LEAF FROM THE PAST.

WE have spoken of the arrest and imprisonment of Herman, and of the unavailing efforts of his mother to get him pardoned. We must now, before following him to his prison, go back to a period ten days previous to the time in which he is first introduced to the reader flying from the policeman Jack Stetson. The character of Herman at that time has already been portrayed, his reckless yet generous character has been painted; his feelings on discovering his father to be a criminal and his subsequent compact with vice and depravity from a stern spirit of resentment against destiny and a fierce feeling of defiance which led him to rush into the commission of crime, all this has been made known to the reader.

With this recklessness of consequences which took possession of his bosom on discovering his father's degrading fate, there yet remained a secret love of good, of virtue, of honor! He was not depraved from love of vice—but from despair of ever becoming virtuous and good with the brand of his father's infamy upon his brow.

One afternoon, ten days before the immediate opening of our story, he was passing up Chatham street toward the park when he came upon a man leaning against one of the park gates and looking about him with a quick, restless look. This person was about forty years of age, tall,

slender and sinewy, with but little flesh upon body or face. He was dressed in a long, much worn blue surtout with tarnished gilt buttons, closely buttoned to his chin, hiding vest, and stock, if such luxuries really appertained to his wardrobe. His trowsers were long and old and flapped about his thin calves. Stockings he wore none, and for shoes he had a pair of old dancing pumps split at the side and down at the heel. His cuffs were too short and left visible a pair of long attenuated dark-skinned hands and wrists covered with hair. In one of these he held an old straw hat in the attitude of a street beggar, the other grasped a stout staff on which he leaned as if from weakness, for he stooped. The face of this man was remarkable. The head was not bared but covered with an old checked cotton cap, beneath which his straight black locks protruded, giving him a wild Indian aspect, but a large and heavy pair of whiskers that grew beneath his chin, all over his throat and filling the deep hollows of his cheeks, showed he was not an Indian. His eyes instead of being black were a sort of greenish gray, sharp and piercing; but they were hid behind a pair of iron-rimmed blue spectacles with round glasses. His brow was very black and heavy and the hairs two inches long, curled upward giving his face in profile a singularly striking appearance. His nose was remarkably long and sharp, his mouth flexible, with large lips and glittering teeth. The expression of his dark, sallow and very extraordinary countenance to a close observer, was intelligent, cunning and bold; but cunning prevailed. The mere passer-by would, perhaps, look upon him as only a poor, attenuated, blind, decrepit beggar. But the tiny and bony form concealed vast sinew power! the close glasses shaded fierce and piercing glances: the decrepit air covered no ordinary strength.

As Herman came up with him he said to him, pretending to drop something into his hat as he spoke:

"I have been all the afternoon seeking you, old Long-brows," said Herman, in an undertone. "The captain says you must be at the Saracen's Head at once! He has found out a job for you!"

"Silver Spoons!" demanded the man with the long nose eagerly. "A penny if you please, sir, to keep a wife and three children from starving to death!" This last was addressed to a decent-looking countryman; who, pausing to regard him, took a shilling from his pocket and with a benevolent look handed it to him instead of coldly casting it into his hat. "Thank you, sir, God in Heaven bless you, sir!" added the black-browed burglar as the man walked on.

"You seem to be doing well, Nosey," said Herman with a laugh.

"Silver Spoons! Your ideas are vulgar! The captain wouldn't send me nor would I come on a silver spoon errand," answered the lad haughtily. "It is plate and money!"

"Good! Do you know where?"

"Yes. Washington Square!"

"One of the marble palaces?" asked the burglar, his green eyes sparkling.

"Yes. The captain has got all the facts about the coin and plate being there and gives you the job!"

"Are you to go with me?"

"Yes."

"Good. Thank you, marm," said the long-browed impostor as a respectable Quaker lady dropped a penny into his hat. "Where will you be?"

"At the Saracen. I am going back now!"

"I will be there at once. Confound it my back is nearly broken, bending it in this fashion. Well, I must be doing something, when there is nothing better."

Herman left him and took the direction past the Post Office and proceeded at a light pace down Center street. The burglar at the same moment commenced moving across the broad space at the junction of Center and Chatham and reaching the side where the Jewish shops line the way so thickly, he entered one of the meanest and disappeared. In a few moments afterward a tall, thin, sinewy person in striped trowsers and a green woolen jacket came forth, and crossing into Center street, threaded it rapidly and turning the third street to the right, came up with Herman at the entrance of a narrow court between walls formed by old wooden buildings tumbling to pieces.

"You are here soon, Long Brows," said Herman to the man, who, though thus addressed had no resemblance to the former Long Brows, otherwise than in his long, thin, bony frame.

The two proceeded up the court, and turned to the left into a narrow arched passage, and came to a heavy door at the foot of a flight of stairs. At three peculiar knocks with the staff carried by the burglar, it was opened on the inside, and as they entered upon the dark steep flight of steps it was immediately closed upon them.

CHAPTER V.

THE BURGLAR CAPTAIN.

THE stairway upon which Herman and the burglar found themselves was narrow, dark and steep. But the former, who went in advance, ascended it with familiar feet and came

to a small landing twenty steps up, from which two doors opened on opposite sides while directly in front of them the stairs were continued to the story above. The door on the right was ajar, and kicking it open Herman entered a large round room without furniture, the plastering fallen from the walls, and the door sunken, and in many places broken up as if for firewood, for the marks of the ax were visible in the planks that remained.

"Look out, Shears," said Herman in that impudent tone which his familiarity with such rogues as his companion had made habitual to him, and in which for shrewdness and usefulness they indulged him; "look out how you step here. There are more man-traps here than grass in a church-yard. Step light, or you'll break through and come down into constable Ketchum's room and break his decanters."

"Don't fear me, younker," answered Shears. "I have been this way before as well as yourself."

"I thought you hardly ever troubled doors, Nosey, but generally made your way to the captain's quarters as you do into other rooms, by the windows," said Herman dryly. "Don't scowl, Eyebrows! here we are at the next stairs. Tread lightly, for you are a heavy man. In this old house nothing has been repaired since the revolution. To drive a nail in it would set it tumbling about the carpenter's ears. Softly."

"The boards do creak and bend as if they'd give way every minute," answered the burglar as he followed him up half the flight, when he opened a side-door made so as to resemble and form a part of the partition of the stairway, and entered it by turning short off to the right from the middle of the flight; a mode of leaving the stairs as unlooked for as it would be unsuspected by one not initiated into all the mysterious turnings and passages in some of the old houses in New York, which have been rented as habitations for rogues and vagabonds. The door led into a very narrow avenue between two walls at the extremity of which was a window raised and opening, not into the air, but into an apartment of a house adjoining that they were in.

"Be cautious here," said Shears. "I remember well this trap door before the window. Are you sure it is chained up?"

"Yes. I see the bolt with the links in it."

"I wouldn't like to be the officer standing on this, ready to get through into the captain's quarters."

"No. You would soon find no bottom under your feet. Frazier, the policeman, once come near going down the trap over in Timber Tower. He was chasing burglar Sams you know, and Sams got through the door ahead of him before the floor was made to drop beneath. Sams found he would break in the door and let go the chain. Down dropped the trap, but as Frazier at the moment had hold of the latch he saved himself; and he only got footing by Sams's help after first promising to go and let him alone. The police afterward came and secured the trap."

"Yes. And since then they are mighty cautious how they venture into old buildings on the track after us."

"I would not defend myself in such a way," said Herman haughtily. "If I could not keep my freedom with a good dirk and a pair of pistols I would let them take me."

"You talk like a boy. When you are as old as I am, and had as many escapes, you will be willing to take any way to keep out of the hands of the police."

Herman made no reply, but springing through the window was followed by Shears, under the pressure of whose tread as he crossed the trap was heard the low rattling of the chains by which it was held in its place beneath the window. This contrivance was by no means a novel one in that region. The floor had been sawed out and the section suspended by hinges and held up by chains passed into another apartment; it was intended to guard the approach too, like a portcullis. It opened into the room beneath when the chain was unbolted and let the victim down full sixteen feet, where he struck a second trap which opened as the other closed by the action of the same machinery and let him into the cellar. Here the unfortunate man, if he escaped without broken limbs and with his life, was bound by a solemn oath never to betray the place, the penalty for breaking his oath being a threat of assassination by any one of the band who could first waylay him. If the policeman was killed in the fall, his body was buried in the cellar and all traces of his presence removed beyond the vigilance of the strictest search.

The window which they passed through opened into the side of a house that was built so close to the other as to touch it. The room they entered was large and like most of those they had passed, was unfurnished, save by cots laid upon the floor, and one or two rude pine tables stained red. At night, however, not only the tables would have been found occupied by a motley throng of both sexes and all ages, but each cot have its occupant. Now the room was deserted save by a blind man and his dog, a small, shaggy black terrier, of the Scotch breed, the former being stretched upon a poor

mattress by the side of the chimney, while the latter, crouching by his side, wistfully regarded the pallid features of his sick master.

As they entered through the window the dog sprang up from his watching attitude and growled fiercely at them, showing his small, white fangs, and raising his back, was about to spring toward them.

"Ho, Bills," said Herman, "don't you know your friends?"

On hearing him speak, the terrier wagged his tail, whined a recognition, and approaching him, caught him by his trowsers, as if he would drag him toward his master.

"I know it, Bills. I know he is sick," answered Herman, kindly, and going toward the invalid. "How is it with you now, Paul?"

"Bad enough, Master Herman. I feel I shan't stand it long. I have begged my last copper. Well, it's God's judgment, I have no doubt—and I hope if I die, he'll have mercy on my soul."

"Don't give up, Paul," said Shears, approaching him. "You'll get better yet, and do as good a business as ever, in your line."

"No, Shears. So you are here. Ah, let me speak to you one word. Never make a mock of infirmities, as you have done as well as me. God'll surely judge you as he has me."

"You are weak, Paul, and so talk nonsense," answered the burglar. "Do you suppose, now, you were struck blind by God Almighty for making believe blind to beg money?"

"Yes, I solemnly believe it," answered the invalid, rising partly up in his bed, and supporting his frame upon his elbow, while he directed his sightless eyeballs upon them. "It is this that is eating up my life. Not sickness, but God's judgment. Six months ago my eyesight was as good as yours—though for three years I had mocked the blind, and stood at the street corner near St. Paul's with my eyes bandaged. Six months ago my sight was as good as any. What then but God's judgment should make me stone blind in one night?"

"Not in one night," repeated Shears, in surprise.

"Yes, Shears—yes, Herman, in one night I was struck blind, four months ago. I laid down seeing as well as ever. Bills woke me in the morning, as he always did, with a bark, but opening my eyes and seeing that all was dark I bade him lie down again, and so tried to sleep again. But he would not let me rest, pulling at my arm and barking, and so thinking that something must be going wrong, I sat up and began to try and see around me. The others were getting up from their cots round me, and asked what was the matter. They told me it was broad day and time to be off to my post. I could not believe them. They soon left the room, and then I heard the rattling of carriages and the tramping of feet upon the sidewalk, and I believed that there was a fire; for that I was stone blind I could not believe. It was a thought that never entered my head. So I went to the window just as I would in a dark room to look out, but all was the darkness of a starless midnight. I listened, and then I heard the newsboys crying their papers; the ice-man shouting his ice for sale; the fruit women uttering their shrill cries. Then the clock of the City Hall bell began to strike, and I counted seven strokes. But it is impossible I should tell you all; how by degrees I began to suspect the truth, and how at length the horrible reality forced itself upon my appalled soul."

"It was dreadful," said Shears, with a deep groan.

"It was God's curse upon me!" answered the blind man, clenching his bony hands together and setting his teeth.

"And you have not seen since that day?"

"No, Shears, not a ray of light. All has been and is to me the blackness of death. It is this that has brought me to my bed, and will soon send me to my grave. I could curse God, but I dare not, for I know I shall soon lie helpless in his hands. I can only hope that his judgment upon me here on this earth will answer the ends of justice, and that I may find mercy after I am dead."

"And you have no suspicion of any cause that produced this?" asked Herman.

"No. I remember sewing on a button and also reading a penny paper before I went to sleep. Yet in the morning I awoke in darkness."

"I pity you, Paul, upon my soul," answered Herman, with warmth of sympathy.

"Thank you, lad! thank you. Let me warn you from my fate never to mock at God's providences. You, Shears, I know, imitate the deformities of men to solicit money. God visits men with their infirmities to excite and draw out pity, benevolence and charity from the hearts of his creatures. In imitating these infirmities, you step in between God's purposes and man's heart, and use as the instruments of your own personal ends the highest and holiest means that God employs for making benevolence and charity grow in the hearts of mankind. Will he suffer you to counterfeit his gold in this way unpunished? Look upon me and witness my own fearful punishment! Look at me the living testimony of his just judgment."

"You are enough to frighten a fellow out of his wits, Paul," said Shears, with an oath. "But you have got your wish. Seeing you is enough. I swear I'll never be caught at these tricks any more. I know that there's a God as well as you, and to tell you the truth, I'm a little afraid of him. I'm dernd if I play possum again, that's a settled point!—So, Paul, if that'll comfort you, put it in your pipe and smoke it. But cheer up and take courage, man! The worst is over with you. You can now beg with a good conscience!"

"I shall die on this bed, Shears," answered the sightless man, sinking back exhausted. "I shall not see many days. Herman, when I am gone, take my dog, and keep him." Here he folded his dog in his arms and pressed him to his breast.

"I will do it, Paul. Good-by, I will see you again before night."

Thus speaking he passed out of the room and crossing an entry rapped at a door.

"What Paul has said, Herman, has made me feel as I never felt before," said Shears, in a low voice, as they waited for a reply to the knock.

"Do you mean to give up disguising yourself as a hunchback and decrepit?"

"Yes, solemnly, if I never get another sixpence."

There was a movement within the room and a small square wicket, just the size and shape of a center panel of the door was opened and a female face of extreme beauty appeared and surveyed them.

"It is Herman and Shears," she said, turning and speaking to some one in the apartment.

"Here at last are they! Let them come in!" The voice of the speaker was pleasant in its cadences, full, manly and very determined.

A bar was removed from the inner side of the door and it was opened slowly and with habitual cautiousness. The two entered, and the door which was very thick and solid, was closed and carefully secured by her who opened it with an oaken bar dropped into strong iron beackets.

The room was about sixteen feet square, well furnished like an ordinary sitting room, with tables, chairs, book-case, curtains and sofa. An inner room containing a bed with a canopy hung with crimson curtains was seen through a door ajar. There was a table on one side of the room covered with books, pamphlets, newspapers, writing materials and supporting also a shade lamp. There were mantle ornaments of bronze, representing a Neptune riding in a car drawn by a pair of dolphins, and a Venus borne in a chariot to which swans were harnessed. There were pictures in fine frames hanging about the room, the subjects being race horses, pugilistic combats, boat races, and over the mantle was a handsome painting in oils from Hogarth's celebrated scene in a cock-pit. The pictures in a room are almost always a sure key to the taste and turn of mind of the inmates. The reader would not look for more refined subjects than these in the habitation of a person whom such an individual as Shears had come to visit.

The male occupant of the room was a young man not above five and twenty, with a fashionable air, yet with a dissipated look. But his was not that look of dissipation which is so often an index of an enervated intellect, but that which is bold, reckless and unprincipled. He was strikingly handsome, with a very determined air and firm lip; and a countenance expressive of intellect perverted by vice if not by crime. He was dressed in a gray blouse buttoned tight to his chin, displaying to the best advantage his full and compactly built chest. His hands glittered with rings, and even on the outside of his blouse was thrown a massive chain of gold terminating in a little side fob where he carried his watch. His hair was long and flowing, of a dark chestnut and resting upon his shoulders and beneath his under lip was what would be termed by the knowing, a handsome imperial. His pantaloons were thrust into the top of his boots, showing the outline of a full calf and a well-formed leg. By his side on the table lay a cloth cap ornamented with a silken tassel. Upon a chair near him was a Spanish cloak with a handsome stick lying upon it. A brace of pistols, and the third, with the butt shattered, lay upon the table half under the newspapers, and a dirk was upon the mantle-piece. A closet door half-open, showed a pair of sharpened foils, and a shelf containing burglars' tools.

The personage to whom appertained all these suspicious appurtenances was Wilkins Wild, the celebrated burglar and pick-pocket, for whose arrest not only large rewards were offered and were at that moment pending, but in search of whom the most vigilant officers of the New York police were diligently engaged. He was now reclining upon the sofa smoking a very fragrant cigar, and altogether as much at his ease as if he was quite ignorant of his notoriety and of the anxiety of his numerous friends of the police corps manifested to make his personal acquaintance.

The female was his wife. She was, as we have said, remarkably handsome. Her features were rounded, soft and feminine, with a blooming complexion, a brilliant hazel eye and long

brown hair arranged with great taste without a single curl or tress, setting off the stately outline of her head and profile to the best advantage. She wore no ornaments save the plain gold ring upon her nuptial finger; yet her hands were white and fairly shaped and would have graced the brightest jewels.

Wild had been a Broadway lounge, a frequenter of theaters, billiard rooms, cafes and gambling saloons; in which, before he reached his twenty-third year, he wasted all the substance, which his father, a merchant of some standing, had left him. He then lived on the purses of his friends, and by cheating new players with false cards until gentlemen withdrew from his companionship, and he took fellowship with blacklegs, among whom he soon became a master spirit. But his fortune in play soon deserted him, and having fallen by accident in with Shears, who knew his need of money, he was led to assist him in a burglary, which being successful in, and realizing considerable money by it, he resolved to follow up. He kept his resolution, until he became the most skillful burglar and also adroit pickpocket professor of those accomplishments in the city. His fame soon spread, and the police 'set their traps' for him; but his disguises, and shapes, and characters were so various, and his haunts so often varied, that hitherto he had defeated their search. He was associated with fourteen, including Herman, who were well tried, and would have lost their own liberty rather than surrender him to the police; for his head planned and devised, and marked out all the ways and means of their successes. His ready wit aided them in escaping detection in the most trying emergencies, and upon his courage and tact they relied in every difficulty which environed them.

It was before he banded openly with gamblers, and while some portion of his fortune remained unexpended, that he met with Isabel, then an inmate of a fashionable boarding-school up town. She was a bold, brilliant, showy girl of a good family who allowed her to have her own way, and consequently the Burglar Captain had little difficulty in meeting her, and soon won her, and secretly they were married, though Isabel still remained at the home of her parents.

At length, however, the secret was discovered, and every effort was made to sever the tie that bound her to the profligate young man, and she was confined in her room as a prisoner.

But she made a rope of the sheets, and fearlessly descended at midnight to the pavement below and fled to her husband.

Alas! for her, she then discovered who and what he was, and that beneath the polite exterior of a gentleman, he concealed a blackened character, and assumed as many aliases as he wore disguises.

She had married a man upon whose head a price was set; one who was called the "Prince of Picklocks," and was the skilled and daring leader of a band of burglars.

It was a bitter blow for poor Isabel, and she wept bitter tears over her fall; but with all his faults she loved him still, and even in his evil life clung to him, as though his career was one of honor, and she, fallen from her pinnacle of honor, became his co-worker in guilt, for, with a woman once degraded, she follows in the paths of vice with utter abandon.

CHAPTER VI. THE CAPTAIN'S PLOT.

"So you have found him, Herman?" said the Burglar Captain, as the youth entered with Shears, and turning to the latter he continued, with a smile:

"Ah, my good friend of the picklock, my honest window-lifter and side-board inspector, I have a little plot to divulge to you that will make your mouth water."

"Have you seen the work, and do you know all I am to do, captain?" asked Shears with a professional sparkle in his cunning eyes.

"Yes; after I sent Hash off yesterday on that matter up to Chester, I met on Broadway a man carrying a parcel, which I knew from the shape and a corner peeping out to be silverware, carefully wrapped up. 'Ah, my man, said I, so you are taking them to my house are you? Well, all right—go on, I will follow you!'"

"Capital, captain," said Shears, with vivacity. "I understand your plan. You are always with your wits about you. Give us your hand."

"And your fingers, Shears," responded the Burglar Captain, complacently rolling up the end of his fine Havana cigar, and replacing it between his lips with an air; "but I will tell you how I managed. I lounged on after him until he turned out of the great thoroughfare down Bleeker street, when I came carelessly up with him, and said:

"You find it rather heavy, my man?"

"No, yer honor, it's not the weight of the bit load, but the careful way I'm told to carry it, that makes it tiresome."

"Let me see," says I, "what is the number you brought it from?"

"Its number—whar Mist'rs Pratt and Woodman kape, yer honor. A long distance doon the Broadway."

"And you recollect my number? I asked in an easy way."

"Yes, I'll be bound it was an easy way, captain," said Shears, with a laugh and a look of admiration for his chief's talents. "Your number. That was a good thought!"

"I've got it in this bit writin' on the card here tied to the package," he said, exhibiting a card which had been covered by his hand.

"I will see if it is right," said I, and glancing at it, read the name of 'Henry Carrol, No. — Waverley place, Washington square.'"

"This was all you wanted, captain," said Shears. "You managed it well—as you always do. I know this house. I've often seen the name on the door, for you know I never pass a house without reading the name and fastening it on my mind. I can tell where ever man lives in the city whose plate is on the door."

"I know well, Shears, that your head is a complete dictionary."

"Well, I wanted to know whether the plate was a new purchase of Mr. Carrol's, or had only been sent to be engraved or repaired. So I said, 'Did Pratt & Woodman send the bill?'"

"Yes, yer honor. It's in my pocket."

"Looking round and seeing that I was not observed, I asked him to let me see it, and on glancing at it I saw that it was a new purchase, that there were five articles of plate, and the aggregate value was two hundred and ninety-four dollars."

"That is a pretty sum, captain."

"Yes; but a trifle to what you will hear of in a moment. Having ascertained all I wanted, I left him, and seeing a cab passing I jumped into it, and drove up Bleeker and down Broadway, till I came opposite Pratt & Woodman's splendid jewelry establishment. Alighting, I lounged in, and after glancing round with a sort of admiring curiosity upon the rich display of wares, I asked to see some watch-keys; but without purchasing, I asked for one of their cards, saying I would call again."

"There is something deep coming now, captain, I am well convinced," said Shears, with a look of respect for his employer's genius.

"You will hear, Shears. De Ruyter, you must take a lesson; for when you are half a dozen years older, with your figure and address, and my teaching, you will be the prince of thieves."

"I have no ambition to be a thief," answered Herman, coloring, and speaking with haughty contempt. "If I am chief of any band it shall be of a band of men who carry knives instead of picklocks."

"Save us, but the lad has mettle in him," cried Wilkins Wild, with a smile.

"He'll wear a cravat with a hangman's tie to it before he is twenty," said the burglar.

"What do I care for the hangman?" answered Herman, with a gesture of contempt for this personage. "If I am ever hung, it shall be for something else than robbing side-boards and pilfering from money-drawers."

"Mercy on us, captain, the boy puts you and I to shame! Well, I am content to live by picking locks. Blood is a fast color and don't wash out. I want nothing to do with it."

"Nor I, Shears. I have never shed a man's blood yet, and I mean to keep out of that. Our present mode of living is innocent and reputable."

"As honest as can be. We wrong no man. We injure nobody. The rich have never been made poorer by what we have lightened their sideboards of. I'd scorn to rob a poor man."

"I admire your sentiments, Shears. But let me tell you what I have for you to do. Having got their card, I went into another store and asked for a pen a moment. With it I wrote on the back:

"HENRY CARROL, ESQ.,
No. —, Waverley Place.

"By Mr. Wilkins."

"I then went about some other matters that called for my attention, and at half-past three o'clock, by which time I knew that Mr. Carrol, whom I, in the interval, had ascertained was a heavy importer, and the president of an insurance company, would have dined and be at home, I took a cab and drove to Waverley Place. Alighting, I ascended the marble flight of steps to the handsome portico and rung the bell."

"Just like yourself, captain," admiringly remarked Mr. Shears.

"Yes, it is like me, I dare say," assented the burglar captain, with an expression of personal satisfaction with himself.

"The door was opened by a footman."

"Is Mr. Carrol at home?" I asked.

"He is, sir," he replied, with a civil bow.

"I have a message for him," I replied.

"Walk in, sir," he said, and throwing wide the door, I entered the lofty hall, which was adorned with statues, and presented to the eye a very imposing look, and giving the visitor at the first sight a favorable idea of the wealth and high respectability of the family dwelling here. The servant, having closed the door, led the way into a small but handsome room adjoining the back parlor. It was the same apartment where they dined; for a polished mahogany table was in the center, on which stood three or four baskets of different kinds of fruits,

a decanter and three half-filled wine-glasses. It appeared as if dinner was through and they had just risen from the dessert.

"Sit down, sir, and Mr. Carrol will be in in a moment," said the servant.

"I seated myself in a very comfortable arm chair near the table, and began to survey the objects in the room."

"No doubt with a professional eye," said Mr. Shears, facetiously.

"In part; but mostly to amuse myself while waiting for the master of the house."

"You must have your plan, and your words to say to him all cut and dried, captain, to take it so coolly!"

"You shall hear, Shears! I saw that there were no light articles about, for in their truly fashionable houses the eating-room is always plainly furnished!"

"Yes, I've noticed that. There's the greatest difference in the world 'tween the dining-rooms of the houses of the rich old families and them of the people as has grow rich by tradin'."

"You are no doubt very observing, Shears. The only ornaments in this room, besides the furniture, which was handsome, were two pictures opposite the table. One of them was of a fine-looking man, about forty-five, with a foreign air—no doubt a Frenchman, for he was dressed in the uniform of a marshal of the empire. The other was that of a lovely little girl of five years, with a countenance so beautiful, so heavenly, so innocently good, that I felt confoundedly wicked with just looking at it! The features were strikingly like those of the gentleman, and I set her down as the daughter. The eyes were softly upturned a little, the lips parted, the expression something between devotion and wonder. What, Bel! Tears in your handsome, bright eyes?"

"It was nothing, Wilkins," said his wife, bending over her needle; but the act did not hide the flashing tear that fell upon the hand that held it.

"You are thinking of our beautiful little Helen. If she had lived, she would have been half the age of the child in this portrait!"

"Thank God, she did not live!" exclaimed the young wife, clasping her hands impulsively together.

"You are becoming a coward, Bel. Where is your boldness and high spirit? If the child had lived, I should have kept it from the knowledge of vice, with a jealousy as watchful as my own love for it, and you know," he added, with natural emotion, causing his voice to waver, "how dearly I loved that little one!"

"Thank God, she is dead. However closely we might have guarded from her eyes and ears the knowledge of our criminal career, she would by and by, when grown up, learn it, and then—"

"Then she would have thrown herself away as I have done," suddenly and sternly cried Herman de Ruyter. "You may as well be glad she is dead," he added, impressively glancing at the fond mother.

There was a momentary silence, which Wilkins, with a forced laugh, broke, and then continued:

"I sat looking at the picture of the child, and wondering if the original were alive, and if so, was as beautiful and good as it appeared on the canvas, when the door opened from the drawing-room, giving me a glimpse of a magnificent suite of rooms, furnished with great luxury and splendor, and a pleasant, portly, good-looking gentleman entered, and with a slight bow fixed his eyes upon me. I rose and said:

"Mr. Carrol, I presume?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am sent here, sir, by Mr. Pratt, I said, handing him, as I spoke, the card of the house, 'to ask permission to examine one of the articles of plate sent here this morning. Mr. Pratt fears that he has sent you by mistake a plated article instead of a silver one. If it should prove so, he desires to apologize, and to correct the error.'"

"Mr. Pratt merits my thanks for his promptness. The plate my family has just been admiring in the adjoining room; and as it is all just now out upon the sideboard for their inspection, you can if you please, Mr. Wilkins (as I see by the card is your name), come in with me and inspect it."

"So I followed him into the back drawing-room, where upon a sort of black marble table, supported by bronze lions, with a mirror beneath, was displayed several pieces of plate. If he called it a sideboard, I should call it a silver altar. There were gathered around it two ladies, one young man, with a mustache, and a lovely child—the very counterpart of the portrait I had been admiring, only four or five years older."

"My dear," said Mr. Carrol, 'this young gentleman, Mr. Wilkins, has been sent by Mr. Pratt to look at the plate, from a suspicion that a false piece has been sent instead of the genuine. Here it is, Mr. Wilkins. You can now see for yourself. My sideboard,' he said, laughing, 'you discover looks like a show-shop; but we have been taking out other pieces, and comparing them with those I have just had home.'"

"You have a very valuable collection of plate here, I answered, and valuable it was, there being not less than eighteen hundred dollars in all, before my eyes, and I am, you know a judge of such things. Among them were two pitchers and a sugar-bowl of pure gold!"

"Captain, I'm there sure!" exclaimed Shears, rubbing his hands together.

"I mean you shall be there soon," answered Wilkins Wild, very quietly. "Well, I took up each article, examined it with a critical eye, and judged of its weight and value while pretending to see if it was silver or imitation. After I had gone through with the farce I had studied beforehand, I said very gravely:

"I am happy to find, sir, that Mr. Pratt has been in error. I see that your pieces are all silver, and the articles you ordered. You have quite a valuable show of plate, sir," I added, half-turning as if to go, while I let my eye linger over the glittering display. "Some of it appears very old."

"Yes, sir. There is a piece there that is two hundred and eight years old. You see it looks fresh and new, though somewhat heavy and antique in its fashion."

"You will scarcely find room in your sideboard, madam," I said, bowing to Mrs. Carrol, "for both your old and new plate."

"Hardly, sir, inside. But as it is growing the fashion now to display plate in the rear drawing-room, as in old English times, I shall find room for it here."

"The black marble slab and the mirror above it, must give a fine effect to such display," I answered.

"I then cast a professional glance around the room, to notice its points and bearings, the position of the windows and doors, which I have all down on this plan for you, Shears," added the burglar leader, showing him a piece of paper on which was traced the ground-plan of a house, with the approaches to it all delineated, and the position of doors and windows all marked. "There is the sideboard, Shears," he said, placing his finger upon a spot on which was written "plate." "Take it, and study it till you commit it to memory. This point is Washington Square. You will enter by the gate in the coach-lane, in the rear."

Shears took the paper, and after glancing at it, folded it up carefully and placed it under a false-lining in his hat. "I have it safe, captain. I want no more instructions than this. Your marks are always true to the chalk."

"I then took my leave of them without suspicion, and made very good use of my eyes in the hall, as I went through it to the street door. What say you, Shears, can you carry this matter out now for me? It will be hard getting into the house."

"Leave all that to me, captain. Did I ever fail getting inside of a house, when I knew just whereabouts the covey lay I was to put hands on?"

"Never, Shears."

"Then this shan't be a first failure! But I must be allowed to have my own way and take my own time."

"Take both, Shears. But I can't give you three weeks time, which you took before bringing that Barclay street affair to a close."

"Then I was circumvented and blasted by all sorts of disappointments. There was a funeral at the house, as come in betwixt me and my plans, and then there was—"

"I know it, Shears; but this affair will be easier. You have your instructions and your ground to work on, now do your best."

"I assure you I'll not be long reporting progress. Let me see. How shall I get into the back premises to study 'em out. I'll play the charcoal man, with a basket on my shoulder, as I did once before."

"Take your disguises, Shears. You'll find what you want in the next room, there! Do you want Herman with you?"

"I may and may not. He'd be useful, if he hadn't a soul above such work! But as he is I don't think he'd play true. Otherwise he'd be of service."

"Try me, Shears. I'll go with you because I want to see this portrait."

"More likely the original, Herman," said Wild laughing. "She was not a whit less lovely than the picture; only her expression was more arch and mirthful."

"I believe I'll go and set my trap for the business," said Shears. "I want to be ready to work by to-morrow night. Something may turn up if I ain't on my feet. If I want you, Herman, I'll find you here or at home."

"Don't come home after me."

"Afraid of the old one, eh?"

"No, not I, but I don't like such suspicious rascals as you are, Shears, to be seen going in and out of my dwelling."

"You are a cutting-needle, boy. But never mind, you are true, and don't fear the devil. If I want you, I'll leave word with the captain."

Thus speaking the burglar left the room by a door opposite that by which he had come in.

"You hit him hard, Herman," said Wild, laughing.

"I do not fear him. I resented the charge of fearing my mother."

"Ah, boy, you will be a gay youth when the old lady dies. That old house and lot she is starving upon you will then get twenty thousand for."

"Don't speak disrespectfully of my mother," said Herman, "I love her, reckless as I am; but I should never have been so if I had not found out what my father is. I am not so bad quite as you and others believe. I hope my mother will outlive me. I never wish to benefit by her death."

"Well, I dare say you think and believe so now, because you are but a boy, but by and by you will think and feel differently."

"If I ever cease to love my mother, I hope I may then cease to live," said Herman warmly.

"Very well. I like that, Herman," said Isabel Wild, with a tone of commendation. "You will never be wholly bad so long as you love your mother."

"I care not how bad I may be," he answered, "I always shall respect my mother. He who would injure her will make me his foe."

These scenes we have just described in this and the preceding chapter, occurred, as we have before shown, a week or more before Herman was introduced to the reader pursued by the police officers into his mother's house. From the time in which we now see him in company with Wild until his arrest, Shears had been diligently at work planning and plotting ways and means to get into the house of Mr. Carrol and in safety remove the large amount of plate. At length, after visiting the rear of the premises and penetrating even into the kitchen in various disguises, he obtained after a week's study, and great personal risk all the necessary information he required, as to the modes of ingress of the family.

A professional burglar like Shears is persevering, patient, diligent and unflagging in approaching his object, and the successful burglary is not the result of a day's, or a night's observation, but often the dwelling or store has been under espionage for weeks, till time and circumstance combine and mark the hour of success.

Shears having "got the train laid," as he professionally called his plans, and "set his traps," found that he needed the aid of just such a youth as Herman de Ruyter, whose size would permit him to crawl through the space in a window, from which a pane of glass had been removed.

But to his disappointment he found that Herman was in prison; but as it was necessary the lad should aid him, for he was fearless and could be trusted, he determined, rather than take any one else into his confidence, to effect his escape from the Island, which was easier to do, he considered, than re-arrange all his plans of robbing the mansion, which would be a great work.

Having twice been in Blackwell's Island prison himself, and each time for months, he was thoroughly familiar with all its localities, and knew, too, which of the keepers' assistants were open to bribery.

He therefore set cautiously to work to effect the boy's release, and, on the fourth day of Herman's imprisonment, set out on his hazardous and daring undertaking, armed with a purse of gold, furnished by the Burglar Captain, and disguised as one of a class of fishermen who early every morning were wont to fish in the narrow straits of Hell Gate, for enough to keep body and soul together.

Procuring a small boat, he boldly pushed out for the fishing-grounds and threw in his line.

CHAPTER VII.

SHEARS PLAYS A BOLD GAME.

A STILL longer retrospective glance, kind reader, and I will resume the thread of the story, to the return of Herman De Ruyter to his old home, after his escape from prison.

In the last chapter, it will be remembered, Shears was fishing in the East river, in full view of the dark walls of the prison, rising strong and massive from the Island, and presenting in their dark and gloomy aspect, a singular and gloomy contrast with the bright and tasteful villas which then graced the verdant and wooded banks of the stream.

"There she stands, the old mother Blackwell!" soliloquized Shears, as he ceased paddling for a moment to survey the walls with the interior of which he was quite familiar; "she looks as if she'd like to grab everybody wot goes by. I'm blamed if I ain't seen her as much as gnash her teeth coz she couldn't get hold of the hull steamboats' passengers what goes up and down past her so often, and lock 'em up and keep them on bread and water. Well, I ain't afraid of her, so here goes. I must have that tight little Herman out of her, for we must work together to-night or never. Moon sets at half-past twelve, and each night it will set earlier and earlier, and moonlight is death to our profession. Well, now for fishing a bit; and then for the island with a straight upper lip and stiff eye-winkers. I know old Josey too well to fear the result."

Thus speaking, Shears, having taken in his paddle and let his boat drift with the current, threw out a couple of lines and began to set himself diligently to work fish-

ing. Slowly his boat drifted in the direction of the island; but he seemed to be wholly absorbed in his occupation. The fish took the bait freely, and he found himself fully occupied in watching both lines. In about half an hour he had caught two dozen perch and sun-fish, keeping his boat in the meanwhile from passing the prison, by occasionally dipping his paddle into the water and giving her an impulse against the tide.

"I think this'll do," he said, glancing out of the corner of his eye at the fish in the bottom of his boat. "I've had good luck, and I must confess I like the sport, when all other honest trades fail," he added, as he gathered them up. "Now for the island, and see what kind of a trade I can drive in selling them." He resumed his paddle, and propelled his boat in the direction of the landing directly in front of the main entrance to the prison. As he was approaching the shore he saw a gang of criminals, numbering full seventy men, clad in the coarse gray attire of the prison, issue from the gate two by two, led by one of the officers, and take their way at a steady tramp toward a part of the island, where they were engaged in some work.

"There go the Blackwell volunteers," said Shears, half aloud. "Pretty uniform, that. I've worn it, and ought to know. The same old double step tramp. No music; not even a Jew's-harp. Dull marchin', that. Well, I don't belong to that corps now, and I don't mean to! Let 'em go. I must think about what I'm here after. There's the sentinel now. Let us see if he'll let me land. I must put on the fisherman. Please, sir," he said, touching his ragged straw hat as his boat approached the little pier, and assuming a humble and deferential air, "please, sir, let me land and see if the steward wants any fish to-day, sir. If you will, sir, I will make you a present of two of the best."

"Yes, man, you may land," answered the sentry. "If you choose to give me a fish or so," he added in a lower tone, "just drop them under that stone as you come up. I'll get them by and by when I'm off duty."

"Thank you, sir. Here they are, two beauties," he said, holding them up to view. "There, sir, I've put them where you said. Now I'll take the basket up to the steward's gate."

"Don't be long."

"No, sir. I'll drive a quick bargain with him. They are nice fish and fresh; for you see I've just caught 'em. Maybe he'll take 'em all."

Bowing with an awkward scrape of his foot to the sentry, Shears took the basket of fish under his arm and proceeded up from the water across the open space in front of the prison. Familiar with all the localities he proceeded toward the entrance which led to the steward's department. Having come to the gate he knocked and was admitted into the range of kitchens, by one of the steward's assistants, who had seen him approach.

"So you have fish, my man," said the steward, coming into the passage. "But what the deuce makes you tremble so?"

"Why I don't like to be inside here much. And that chap has shut the door I come in at. It's an awful place, sir! If you'll just buy my fish and let me go I'll be obliged to you."

"Ha, ha," laughed the fat steward; "you are a brave lad, I faith. You come here to sell fish and tremble as if you had come to serve a twelvemonth! How would you like to try thirty days here?"

"Not for all the world, your worship. It would be the death o' me. Please, sir, buy the fish! I'm tired stayin' here in this dreadful place already. I would not ha' come at all; but father's sick, and mother's got the jaunders, and one o' my brothers is gone died and I hain't got no sister, and so I had to come for to keep 'em from starvin' and to buy medicine and vittals."

"You are a precious one. I say, Josey," cried the steward, "here is a fisherman that is as jolly green as a turtle's eye. He's as 'fraid o' being o' the inside of these walls as if he expected to have his head cut off. Suppose you give him a touch o' your profession."

Here the steward winked at a little, short, thick-set man, with a round head on which the black hair was cropped all over as short as a week's beard. He had small blue, sparkling, avaricious eyes—a very small nose that curved upward at the extremity, and a double chin. He was one of the assistant wardens, and for him Shears had been closely looking round all the time he had been pretending to be so much alarmed at being inside of the prison wall. On seeing him enter the passage, Shears felt that his work was already accomplished. Josey, hearing the words of the steward, turned, approached him, for he was in the act, when spoken to, of crossing the passage toward an iron gate, which led to a gallery of which he held the key in his hand—a massive instrument that rivaled that of the Bastille. As he came near he fixed his little blue eyes upon Shears, who, as a fisherman, stood with his basket on his arm, near the door by which he had entered. His attitude was one of awkwardness and timidity. Shears as he approached dropped his eyes.

"What is this you say, Mr. Steward?" said the assistant warden. "What does he want?"

"He comes in here to sell fish, and because the gate was locked behind him after he enters, he trembles as if he never expected to get out again! Suppose you give him a sight of the premises! It may cure him."

"Oh, sir, not for the world! I am in hurry. If you won't buy my fish, let me go, gentlemen."

While Shears was speaking, he stole a keen, searching, recognizing look at the face of the assistant warden, and succeeded in fixing his eye. The warden gave a slight start, and returned the glance. Shears saw that all was right. He well knew his man from the first.

"So, he is frightened is he," said Josey. "I'll teach him to be frightened, 'pon my honor I will. Buy his fish, steward, for we want fish in our mess to-day, and then let him come with me."

"I will give you twenty cents for the lot," said the steward.

"Well, sir, take them. Though I ought to get twenty-seven cents; but as I want to get out of this pesky place as soon as I can, I'm willin' to take what I can get for 'em. It's the last time I shall trust myself in here I guess. Thank you, sir. There's just the change. Now, gentlemen, I'll go, if you please."

"Not quite so soon, my lad," said Josey, winking at his friend the steward who returned the sign; "I want to show you a little more of the place you are so frightened at."

"Yes," said the steward, "if he gets frightened, let it be at something. Suppose," he added in a whisper, "you lock him up in a cell for half an hour or so. It will be rare sport."

"Never fear me. I'll pay him for being scared at trifles. Come with me, fisherman," he said sternly; "I have my suspicions that you are in here for no good purpose. Come with me and let me examine you and know all about you, before we let you go."

"That's it, Josey; you understand the game," said the humorous inclined steward, in a confidential and approving whisper. "Yes, fellow, you must be examined before you quit this place. It is not everybody we must let in and out here."

With well feigned terror and many protestations of his innocence, Shears at length surrendered his collar to the grasp of Josey, and was led off by him through two doors which he locked behind him, into an inner apartment completely furnished as a bedchamber, it being his own proper domicile. Having closed the door and turned the key in the bolt, Josey placing his two hands emphatically upon each shoulder of the burglar, said laughing:

"So, my prince of picklocks. You are a nice one! What the deuce has brought you into this trap again, Shears? I never expected to see you put your head in here of your own accord."

"Well, I shouldn't Josey; but I knew I had a good friend in you here."

"Softly, my boy, softly. Stone walls even have ears! What's in the wind now?"

"Why you see, they have nabbed a little friend of mine, who is very useful to me in my line and perticklerly just now, as I have a rare affair on hand."

"At your old tricks again, hey?"

"I can't starve. Must do something."

"That's true. If there were no rogues I shouldn't enjoy my present snug berth. You are my good friends. Well, who have we here? How can I serve you? I know you have money, Shears, or you wouldn't be here; so how can I serve you?"

"Do you know a lad here by the name of Herman Ruyter, who was brought here four days ago for lifting a gentleman's watch?"

"It's No. 37. A handsome little fellow, with a keen eye, about sixteen?"

"The same. I have ventured here as you see, selling fish, as I have seen the fishermen do here, on purpose to get to speak to you if I could, by hook or by crook. I'm more lucky than I expected. I must have that boy to help me to-night in my work."

"He is in my division. He shall go if we can agree on the terms," said Josey impressively.

"I will give you these three gold pieces of five dollars each."

"It is a great risk, Shears. You must put on another five."

"Done. There is the money. Now I depend upon you."

"Have I ever deceived you, Shears?"

"No. I depend upon you without any doubts. How will you manage?"

"Let me see. Can the boy swim?"

"Like a duck."

"Then there is no trouble. You have a boat here? Be with it just after dark close in the shore opposite the lower sentry stand, and the boy will join you."

"Do you mean for me to wait on the west side under the rock by the Rock Head Inn?"

"Yes."

"It is the very place where Sam's sister waited for him when he made his escape that night."

"And never was a bolder escape made from this place than that. He was a daring fellow, that Sam; and his sister was his equal in courage."

"What has become of him?"

"They do say that he has joined a buccaneering schooner, and is cruising somewhere in the West Indies. There is no doubt he knows more than anybody else about the sudden disappearance of that Counselor Gardner; and if he shows himself here again, he'd find matters too hot for him."

"You are only jealous of his talent, Shears, and don't want him as your rival in your profession. By the by, how comes on 'the captain'?"

"He is well, and doing well."

"And his pretty wife? They say she can turn him round her finger."

"He is governed a good deal by her; but when he chooses he'll have his own way you may be assured."

"I wonder how the devil he keeps out of the hands of the police as he does?"

"Well, some of them look after him with two gold pieces, like those you have been playing with in your hands, placed over each eye, so you see they can't see very well."

"That's true. Gold pieces is too thick to be seen through easily."

"Others have had so many rough tricks practiced on them when they venture in out of the way places that they are cautious how they come in our neighborhood. The place where the captain now is would be worth any man's neck to attempt to find, and no man would suspect the passage leading to it if he knew that he was in the neighborhood."

"I have been looking for him up here some time. Well, his hour 'll come as well as others! Every rogue, Shears, has his day. I shall have the pleasure soon, I dare say, of turning a key on you again," he added with a smile.

"It may be, Josey. But I am slyer now than I used to be. I have been taught by experience."

"The next time you will be likely to grace Sing Sing, Shears."

"It may and mayn't be," answered the burglar with a dubitable shake of his head.

After some further mutually edifying conversation, the assistant warden opened the door of his room and reconducted the disguised burglar toward the steward's office, the latter feigning the greatest trepidation and manifesting the utmost anxiety to escape, greatly to the delight of the fat steward, to whom Josey, with a wink, conveyed the pleasant information that the fisherman had seen enough of the inside of the prison to prevent his ever desiring voluntarily to enter one again.

The day had closed and the moon, but half-way to the full, assumed her empire over night. A boat lay crouched in the shadow of the shore under the Rock Head Inn. It contained a single individual who was concealed all but his head in the bottom of the boat. His gaze was intently fastened upon the dark walls of the prison, and his ears in the attitude of one anxious to catch the least sound.

Within the prison, Josey is just in the act of unlocking the outer gate of the kitchen department. By his side stands young Herman de Ruyter.

"Now, boy, be cautious how you move! Keep in with the walls as long as you can, and then creep along the grass toward the water. It is ready for mowing, and will conceal you if you are careful not to rustle nor show your head. Now remember you are never to speak of me."

"I know how to be secret," answered Herman firmly.

"Take care of yourself and don't get back here again."

"I will look out for that, sir."

The heavy door was closed by the assistant; and the lad, free on the outside, fled like the wind along the dark shadows of the walls. At the furthest extremity he crouched down and was lost in the deep grass to the sight of Josey, who had been closely watching his scarcely visible progress through the grates of a window that overlooked the ground.

Suddenly Shears in his boat raises his head with a quick motion and keenly bends his eyes over the water. He hears a low sound as if its surface was slightly disturbed. He listens and watches. The regular heaving and rippling of the water as if pressed forward by the breast of a swimmer is clearly distinguishable. His eyes just detect a dark object plainly visible upon the water. A broken wave sparkles to his eyes in the uncertain light of the young moon, and then comes the rushing sound of water mingled with the short suppressed breathing of one buffeting the tide. The dark object grows more distinct each moment. Pressing the end of his paddle against the rock, Shears caused his boat to shoot outward from the shore, and the next moment Herman de Ruyter had his hand upon the gunwale and was drawn on board.

"You are a brave little fellow, Herman," said Shears as the lad shook the water from himself just as a Newfoundland dog would do. "You have made a handsome escape of it. You will come to something yet. Are you tired?"

"No. I can swim twice as far without fatigue. I should have got along faster, but for my clothes on."

"You have done bravely. Now strip off your

prison dress and cast it overboard. Here is a suit I brought with me expressly for you, from your mother."

"Have you seen my mother to-day, Shears?" asked Herman earnestly.

"No. You said, you know, you'd rather I not show my ugly visage in your doorway. But I never bears any grudges, Herman, so I forgives it. The captain called and asked her for the suit, telling her he would do his best to get you out of prison; for which she was grateful enough to him. In course he passed himself off as a lawyer wholly interested in your welfare. So she gave him the clothes."

"He was very kind. So my mother is well. I am glad to hear that. Now, Shears, what am I released for? The man there, Josey, who let me out, told me I was to find you here, and that the captain had something for me to do."

"I'll tell you as we paddle along toward the city. We must keep inshore and take it leisurely; for we can't do any work till after twelve, when the moon goes down. For my part I never yet see the good of a moon. It's alays in the way of a fellow's business. Stars in a clear night's bad enough, but one can get along pretty well with 'em, coz they arn't over bright. But the moon is a real spy out and out! a regular marplot. But about what's before us, I'll just tell you my plan, Herman."

Shears then went into the details of his plot so that Herman fully understood them; and as it promised risk and danger his bold spirit readily entered into it; and in his mind he resolved that if it were possible he would, before he quitted the house, lay eyes upon the beautiful little girl, the description of whose beauty by 'the Captain,' had fired his young and ardent fancy.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MIDNIGHT MARAUDERS.

THE deep tones of the City Hall bell had just ceased striking midnight, when two figures, a man and a boy, emerged from the gloom of the shaded avenue on the north side of Washington Square, and getting over the low barrier stood a moment together upon the sidewalk. The moon was low in the west, and a few dull colored clouds were driving across the face of it.

It was a night to delight the soul of a burglar; and Shears felt happy.

"There was never a richer night made for my profession than this, Herman," said the man to the boy, after looking round. "Come now, let us be moving. The moon has dipped her lower edge and by the time we want darkness we shall have it. Keep a sharp eye round for the Charlies."

Thus saying, Shears stepped from the curbstone, and with Herman by his side crossed the street into the Fifth Avenue. They walked on a little ways with noiseless footsteps, for their feet were covered with India rubber shoes, keeping close with the walls of the stately edifice on the right. At length they came to a narrow lane which was bounded on one side by the stables belonging to private mansions on Washington Square, and on the other by a lofty fence inclosing the rear premises of the same houses. They stopped before a closed gate in the high fence, which inclosed the yard. Shears opened his jacket, and from a leathern bag, suspended around his neck, he took out a slender iron rod, seven inches in length. He inserted it in a hole above the latch, which he had previously perforated for the purpose.

"Take hold of this latch lifter, Herman, and hold it up, for I've caught the latch inside and raised it. Hold it firm, while I apply my key to the lock; for the gate is both locked and latched. They never spares no expense, these rich folks, to have every thing secure. But I never yet saw a gate or a door I couldn't open, give me time and proper tools. I was two nights getting this gate ready for going through it. Zounds, the key I made, fits as if it was twin brother to the right one. Confound that squeaking! It turns rusty. There now lift the latch with your wire. That is it! The gate is open. Now softly, and make yourself as small as you can. Follow me close, as you don't know the premises." Shears then closed the gate carefully, and latched it, in case, as he said, lest any of the Charlies poking round might find it ajar and suspect. Look out for this step here. The way we've got to go is to go up six steps at the end of that gallery with blinds to it, where they keeps flower pots. Come now, after me softly. The burglar, thus cautioning Herman, crossed the paved yard and came to the foot of a flight of steps that led into a large and elegant conservatory filled with plants, and inclosed by glass sashes and venetian blinds. The glass door at the head of the stairs was locked. The panes being too small to admit Herman, Shears, promptly taking from his pouch a screw driver, applied it to the hinges, the screws of which he had the night before loosened. He opened the gap to let Herman enter, and then following himself replaced it.

Shears went noiselessly to work with his screw driver, and soon the blind turned upon its hasps instead of upon its hinges, and left the way free to the window.

"Thanks to these rich bursters," he said in the same tone; "they al'ays get crack big panes for show, and them's as good as an open doorway for us!"

The skillful burglar then drew from a leathern case, a thin-bladed knife, with a point sharp as that of a lancet, and inserting it between the putty and the woodwork of the sash, he drew it steadily down from the length of the pane, pressing it through to the glass. He did the same on the other three sides. He then adroitly removed with the thin instrument he used the triangular shaped ridges of brown putty, leaving the glass clear. With a small pair of delicately formed pinchers, of his own make and fashioning, as all his tools were, he drew out some eight or ten wedges of tin driven in by the glazier to secure the glass to its bed. Then with a gentle, steady application of the opposite end of his pinchers as a pry he lifted the large pane of glass from its place, and carefully stood it up on end by the side of the window on the floor of the conservatory. As he safely completed this important operation, he drew a long breath of relief, for the noise might have betrayed him, and then the plate would have been lost; for Shears in such cases always thought more of the loss of his booty, than of any bullet which those who chanced to discover him might send through his jacket.

"There, youngster, all is now plain sailing," he said in a deep whisper. "All the rest remains with you. You must try and think yourself a cat for the next twenty minutes. The sideboard is on the left side. Crawl over the carpet till you come to it. Then feel for the silver, its on a sort of marble table over the sideboard. You'll know it by the touch, and let the touch be as delicate as if you were feeling for the point of a hornet's sting, so as not to get it pricked into you. I would have you open the window after you get inside, but I dare not trust any man to lift a window at such a time but myself. So as I can't get in, you must do all. Take off your jacket so that the sleeves and lapels shan't hit anything. I always strip to my trowsers when I have a nice job afore me."

Stooping down Herman pushed himself through the opening without much difficulty and found himself upon a carpet soft and thick to his touch. The room was perfectly dark. He listened an instant, and then crept softly across the room in the direction of the marble sideboard. He moved without noise and with a degree of caution that would have drawn commendation from Shears could he have witnessed his progress. On reaching the sideboard, which he knew by the supporters, which Shears had told him were lion's feet he gradually raised himself until he stood upon his feet. He then extended his hand, and feeling inch by inch, his fingers encountered a piece of plate. He removed it with the greatest care and laid it on the carpet. A second and a third were placed with the first. Then fearing if he collected too many at a time, he should become entangled in them and fall over them, he laid down upon the carpet, and taking a silver basket in his teeth, and two salvers, one in each hand, he returned to the window. So noiseless had been his movement that Shears was not only unaware of his return, but he had been all the while doubtful if he had moved a yard from the window; but he did not dare to call to him to ascertain. He now ascertained his presence only by hearing his name pronounced in a low whisper.

"Have you found the sideboard?" he asked bending down toward the opening.

"Take this," answered Herman, passing the basket through. "Be careful! I have two more."

"You are a credit to my tutorin," said the burglar, taking the articles from him one after another, and depositing them in a capacious canvas bag he had brought rolled up under his arm, first rolling each in a piece of flannel to keep it from jingling against the rest.

"All is so still and quiet," said Herman, "that I think you could spring the lantern without danger. Not a soul but is buried in sleep. It is impossible for me to get all in the dark; and besides in taking down the last piece there was another on the top of it, which I had near thrown with it. It may be that I shall make some noise yet and then we may be detected. A light is less dangerous than a sound."

"You are right, Herman. Here, take my darky-glum and open it carefully. Place it with the back to the window so that there can be no glare this way."

Herman took the dark lantern and removed the slide. It emitted a powerful light about the size of a bull's-eye, which sent a strong flood of radiance upon whatever object it was directed. He turned it toward the sideboard and the dazzling reflection the silver gave back almost called forth an exclamation of surprise from the cautious and habitually guarded Shears. Placing the lantern upon a table, Herman proceeded with celerity to remove the rich booty and pass it through the window to the burglar, who with equal celerity transferred it to the canvas bag.

While they were engaged in this occupation a bell in a neighboring tower struck the fire

alarm, and the noise of the watchman repeating their cry reached their ears.

"If that fire is near us, Herman, it may trouble us in getting off with our traps," said Shears. "There is two pieces more, hand them quick. The people in the house may get up, for I think from the sound, that the fire is close by."

Herman placed the other two pieces down upon the carpet by the window, beside six or seven others which Shears had not yet transferred to his bag. Seeing nothing more upon the sideboard, his eye was attracted by a silver bell-knob suspended from a rich band of crimson silk by the side of the door leading into the hall. Not aware that it was connected with a bell, he seized it to pull it off when his ears convinced him of his error. Shears had seen his intention and had tried to catch his eye by extravagant signs to warn him to desist, fearing to speak lest his voice should be heard.

"Now you've done it and be bless'd!" he said. "Douse your lights and take care of yourself."

Springing to his feet, and leaving within the window upon the carpet, four pieces not yet bagged, he threw his sack of silver over his shoulder and Herman saw him disappear from the window in rapid flight.

The bell he had set in motion was yet vibrating through the house, and his imminent danger flashed upon him. He sprung for the lantern, and closed it, and then made a spring for the window. The fire-bells were still clanging without, the watchmen's voices grew nigher and more earnest, and a faint glimmer visible through the venetian blind of the conservatory convinced him the conflagration was in the immediate neighborhood. Suddenly he heard a door open within the house. He was about to stoop to escape when the sound of a tumult in the yard, the shout of men, the loud voice of Shears, lifted in terrible denunciation, with the ring and clatter of silver metal as if fallen upon the pavement, led him to pause with alarm and hesitate to go out, for that Shears had fallen into bad hands he had no doubt. Listening and finding all still in the house, he resolved to remain in the room until the uproar without should cease and he could retire in safety, for that Shears should betray his presence he had no fears. He therefore withdrew from the window and concealed himself beneath an ottoman.

Shears had indeed fallen into the hands of the Philistines. Two watchmen had observed his exit and after a hard fight succeeded in capturing him. One of them drawing a cord, kept for such purposes, from the pocket of his coat, bound him with his hands behind his back, and were for greater security, about to bind his feet together with just room for walking, when Mr. Carrol and his servants, who had been alarmed by the struggle, appeared at the windows and doors. The elder watchman soon informed him what the matter was, and said there was yet another one in the house, as two persons had come down the lane. At this intimation, Mr. Carrol put his head in from the window and was heard to call for his pistols and give orders to his servants to guard all the doors.

After a strict search of half an hour, nothing was discovered of any other burglar, though Mr. Carrol found the dark lantern in his parlor and other evidences of Herman's presence in there. But he all the while remained concealed in the ottoman, under which, as an inverted box, he all the while lay in safety. Having satisfied himself that there was no other robber on the premises, Mr. Carrol replaced his silver, and sending for a carriage had Shears safely conveyed in it to the Tombs.

CHAPTER IX.

IN A TRAP.

HERMAN lay beneath the ottoman until he heard a clock over the mantle-piece strike four. All was by this time perfectly quiet throughout the house. "I must find some way of getting out! I will try the front door. It is probably locked with the key in the inside!"

He took some steps, when he stopped petrified. Almost close at his feet came a deep, heavy sighing, accompanied with a slight movement. Instinctively he retreated a step and stood straining his eyes to see through the darkness! That some one of the servants was lying upon a settee in the hall asleep at once occurred to him; and he remained a moment uncertain how to act.

"Perhaps, it is one of them," he reflected. "I may pass him and get to the door without awaking him! Whoever it is he seems to sleep soundly. I will try. If I do not escape this way, I don't know how I shall get away at all. I will advance."

Then boldly and coolly determining, this young lad of seventeen, armed with the decision and nerve of an experienced man, resumed his progress with noiseless tread. He still heard the breathing, close before him. It was irregular and sounded strange to his ear, and seemed to him to come from the floor. He thought from this that the person, whoever he was, might be lying asleep upon the mat directly in front of the door. If so, he would have to step over him. After taking a step further forward and

listening so as to ascertain the exact direction of the breathing he was satisfied that the sleeper lay upon the floor, directly in his path. Crouching down upon his hands and knees he reached forward and felt the rich fringe of a mat. He then advanced his hand with the utmost caution, with the intention of ascertaining the position of the body of the sleeper by a light touch of his garments, so that he might be able to step over him or go round him without disturbing him. His hand, as he advanced it over the mat, came in contact with what he conceived to be fur, and thinking it was a bear skin laid upon the mat, as he had often seen in the halls of houses, he proceeded to examine further for the position of the body of the sleeper whom he supposed to be lying upon it, when he felt a sensation of warmth and life through the skin he had touched. It heaved beneath his hand with a low breathing. With the sensation came a thrill of mortal fear, accompanied with an instinctive suspicion of the horrible truth. He drew back as if he had placed his hand upon red-hot iron, and in his surprise and alarm he neglected that caution on which alone his safety depended. The noise he made was answered by a deep growl and a sudden movement of a large animal body. There was no time to reflect. Flight was his only refuge. He found that he had roused a dog from his slumbers, and that it would be a struggle for life if he was attacked by him. He leaped backward and attempted to gain the stairs. In the darkness he stumbled, and in recovering himself he was met by the dog who sprung upon him with a savage growl. The paws of the dog struck his breast, and the close breath of the animal he felt hot in his face. This was a moment to call forth all his energies and courage. To fly was now hopeless. To endeavor to overcome the dog was his only chance of escaping. Without suffering his horrible situation in the grasp of the animal, whom he found was of great size, to overcome him, he summoned his courage for the crisis he was called upon to meet.

The dog, therefore, had no sooner leaped upon him; he had no sooner felt the heavy dash of his paws against his breast and his hot breath upon his face, than he threw his arms around his neck and hugging him close threw him down. The dog struggled to release his head, forcing his paws against his chest and gnashing his teeth with ferocity. Herman held on upon his neck with the grasp of resolution, in despair. Together they rolled over and over upon the hall floor, now Herman, now the dog uppermost. The enraged animal gnashed his teeth but did not howl; while Herman in stern silence struggled for the mastery and for life. At every roll over he pressed the head of the dog closer in his right arm, while with the left he sought in his pocket for a knife. He succeeded in getting hold of it, but a terrible effort made by the dog to get free, caused him to drop it upon the floor. He again got it into his possession, and opened the blade with his teeth. He almost shouted for joy as he held the open blade in his hand, and the next moment plunged it deep under the neck of the dog. The animal uttered a fearful cry, and his sinews instantly relaxed and his head falling back, Herman saw that he had penetrated his heart. He held him an instant longer in the grasp to which the love of life had given strength superhuman, and seeing that he was now quiet, he released his hold, and leaving the slain animal at his feet, he sprung up.

There was no time to congratulate himself upon his victory, for the noise of the conflict had brought from their rooms, at the head of the hall stairs, Mr. Carrol and his family. He was in his dressing gown; and, holding a light in one hand and a pistol in the other, he advanced to the banisters.

"What is all this uproar again to-night?" he exclaimed in astonishment. "It would seem this house is haunted."

Herman did not wait for him to descend the stairs but darting toward the darkness in the rear of the hall, for the light held by Mr. Carrol would have exposed his retreat by the front door, he made an attempt to escape by the stairs in the rear hall. But not finding them in the darkness, and coming instead to an ascending flight leading to the chambers, situated on the back of the house, the sudden thought occurred to him that he would be less likely to be sought for in the upper rooms; and, as all those who had been alarmed were descending the front stairs he saw he could ascend these unseen and perhaps secrete himself in some room until he could, during the day or the next night, get away in safety. This plan of action was suggested and decided upon in an instant. The next moment he was swiftly mounting the dark stairway. He gained unseen the head of the flight of stairs, and passing along the entry was about to ascend the second to the next story when a door at the top opened and a servant maid appeared with a light in her hand. A half-open door was before him and it was but the decision of a thought to dart into it and close it after him. There was a taper light upon the table and by it he saw that he had flown for refuge into a small, but neat and handsomely furnished bed-chamber. Every article around him was elegant, and even the bed was an ornament to

the room. It was a small couch surmounted by a canopy, and curtained with white lawn. A second look showed him through the partly drawn curtains that a person lay in bed. His first impulse was to extinguish the taper and in the darkness fly to some other place of security. But the size of the couch, and a glimpse he had of a small hand thrown carelessly upon the outside of the counterpane showed him that the occupant was a child. At the thought all his pleasurable emotions touching the lovely little girl of whom the Burglar Captain had spoken came rushing back upon his soul and forgetful of the danger of his situation, heedless of the sounds of confusion which reached his ears from the front hall at the discovery of the Newfoundland dog lying in his blood, he softly approached the couch, and gently drawing aside the curtain, so that the light could fall upon the features, stood transfixed with sweet surprise. With her lovely cheek pillowed upon her left hand and one bare arm thrown in her restless slumbers on the outside of the coverlet, lay the original of the picture of which Wilkins Wild had spoken. She was about ten years of age, with a clear complexion just tinted with the hue of the moss-rose bud. Her auburn tresses had been confined beneath a small muslin cap, but the cap was now thrust half off her head and the golden curls, escaped from their imprisonment, lay profusely about her brow and cheek and half burying her dimpled hand in their waves. An expression of peace and innocence reposed upon her features, and around her lovely mouth played a half smile as if she was dreaming pleasantly.

Herman gazed upon her with looks almost like adoration. He felt he could have knelt before her as to an angel. High and good thoughts possessed his soul, and led him to wish that he might be pure and good, even as he knew she must be pure and good. Then there came over his mind dark thoughts of what he was; of his father's crime; of his present course, and as he reflected how impossible it would ever be for him to be good like her, how she would fear and shrink from him, did she know that he was there, his feelings grew bitter, and he thought he could hate her for being so pure and happy, and surrounded by such luxuries and blessings, while he was an outcast, and at that moment a hunted criminal.

It is difficult to convey in words the exact state of feeling which agitated the bosom of Herman. If he and the object of his emotion had each of them been seven or eight years older, it might have been credited to the first movements and instincts of love. But love it was not. It was a romantic sentiment, which, in a youth like Herman, had a depth and energy that possessed the power to influence his character for life, should he yield to it. It was a feeling arising from contrasts, and which might either lead to hatred of the object or to emulation; might lead to a gentleness or ferocity, as hope or despair got the ascendancy. His youthful imagination had been excited by the account given of her beauty by Wilkins Wild, and he had been seized with a strong desire to behold her. She was now before him in loveliness far transcending the description, which had fired his fancy; and as he gazed upon her, his bosom was agitated, and his thoughts confused and tumultuous. We have said he was a youth of strong points of character; of a daring and adventurous as well as romantic spirit, and with a maturity of thought and feeling far in advance of his years. He looked upon the lovely slumberer with wild wishes, and daring hopes went rushing through his brain. Suddenly he was recalled to a sense of his perilous situation by the noise of the voices, and the sound of a general search throughout the house. Instinct of self-preservation led him to consult his safety. A feeling he could not account for led him to believe he should be safest in the presence of one so pure and beautiful; and the thought occurred to him that if he was arrested there, she might plead in his behalf for his release. Rather than quit her presence, he felt he should prefer detection; and slight as was the chance of concealment then, he determined to secrete himself there and nowhere else. The door which he had closed he softly locked; and then by the aid of the taper looked around him. There stood in one corner of the chamber a tall mahogany clothes-press. He opened it and saw that it was hung with garments. Among other articles it contained a lady's fur pelisse. He was about to go into the press, and place himself behind this shelter, which promised, even if the press was opened and looked into, to be a perfectly secure one, when it occurred to him that his locking the door might lead to suspicion of his presence. He therefore crossed the chamber to turn back the key, and then to retreat to his concealment, when to his surprise he saw the lovely occupant seated up in bed, her hand holding aside the curtain, and her head in the position of listening, while her attitude was one of alarm. The noise below had awakened her. Her eyes fell upon him before he could retreat from view, and she was about to shriek when he sprung forward, fell upon his knees before her, and clasped his hands together in an attitude of the most eloquent supplication. His earnest, imploring looks fixed upon her, with

his deprecating attitude, arrested her voice, and awakened emotions that, if they did not wholly do away fear, greatly diminished her alarm. She regarded him in silence, wonder and curiosity expressed in her pale face. We have said that Herman, with his dark eyes and finely-formed features, was remarkably handsome. As she surveyed him, she lost her fears, but yet remained gazing upon him with profound surprise, one hand lifting the curtain, the other supporting her form, in the attitude in which he had first discovered her on her waking.

"Who are you? What are you?" she at length asked, with surprising firmness; though her sweet-toned accents were as tremulous as a guitar swept with trembling fingers.

"I seek your protection. I am pursued by those who would cast me into prison."

"What have you done?" she asked, her clear blue eyes opening wider, as she heard this account of him. "The bad are only pursued!"

"I have been bad, but I am very sorry that I have been so, now that I have seen you, who are so good and lovely. I came with a bad man to rob this house. The alarm was given. He escaped, and as I could not get out, I hid myself."

"I am terrified," and for a moment she looked as if she would fly. Her courage returned, and she said: "You are then a robber. Yet you do not look evil. I am afraid to stay with you here."

"I will not harm you. I pray you let me stay here until I can escape. You are too good and kind to give me up or betray me. Let me hide in this press. I can conceal myself behind the garments. If you refuse, I shall be taken and thrown into prison."

"But you have been doing very, very wrong."

"I know I have. I deserve to be punished; but I know you could not bear, after I was in prison, to know that I was placed there because when you might have saved me you refused to do it." As Herman thus spoke he rose to his feet, and fixed his eyes earnestly upon her. His pleading had not been so much for himself, from cowardly fear of prison, as to awaken an interest in her breast for him.

His beauty, his manly appeal, his confident trusting to her generous nature, awakened in her the feeling he sought to inspire.

"Do not approach me any nigher," she said, earnestly. "I will try and protect you, if I can."

"Only do not tell any one where I am concealed! This is all I ask."

"Who do you fear?"

"Your father. Do you not hear them below and on the stairs?"

"My father! Mr. Carrol is not my father. But they are coming up the stairs. What have you done to be pursued now, after having escaped detection at the first? Why did you leave your concealment? I am afraid after the search is over, and all retired to bed, you will try and pilfer again."

"No," answered Herman, indignantly. "I did not come here at the first so much to rob as to behold you. I confess I have been so foolish as to connect myself with a band of burglars, and one of them wished me to come here with him to take the plate. To curiosity to see you, then, and not to the low desire of pilfering plate, attribute my present situation. You ask what I have done to alarm the house, a second time. I was making an attempt to escape through the front hall, when I was attacked by a large dog, who would have torn me in pieces if I had not succeeded in killing him with my pocket-knife."

The young girl covered her face with her hands at this recital, and shuddered.

"Killed Leo! Well, I am sorry—sorry! for I loved him. But it is better the dog should perish than you. Oh, poor Leo! You know not what a grief it is to me to know you have slain my noble Leo!"

"Will you forgive me?"

"Yes, if you will go and hide!" she cried, his danger taking the place, for the moment, of every other consideration.

Herman smiled gratefully and kindly upon her, and the next moment was hid in the press. The lovely child was true to her generous intention. Although her room was entered and searched, yet as the key of the press could nowhere be found, it was not examined, and little suspected of containing the fugitive, for it was not to be supposed that he could have got into a place that was already locked.

Thrice that day did she stealthily bring food to her prisoner, and tell him that he must keep quiet until night, when she would find a way to get him safely off.

How that way was, and how, when Herman escaped from the house and reached his mother's, he came to bear in his arms his lovely deliverer, almost lifeless, we leave to be told in the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE CAPTURE AND RESCUE.

As it began to grow dark, Herman, in anticipation of his release by his young and lovely protectress, became impatient.

At length he heard a light step in the cham-

ber and a slight sound, the door of the press told him that his deliverer had arrived to liberate him as she had promised to do. She opened his cage, and he saw that the room was perfectly dark, save at intervals the flashes of lightning would illumine it for a second.

"You can escape now, Herman," she said, in a low but firm voice. "Make no noise and follow me. You had best take your shoes in your hand."

Herman followed her softly from the room into the hall at the head of the stairs. Here she stopped and listened.

"Now you must be perfectly quiet," she said, very determinedly. "I shall lead you down the stairs and into the back parlor, and out of the window of the conservatory. Now be perfectly still and come with me."

"You are an angel, and I will do just as you say," answered Herman. However, he followed her noiselessly to the lower hall and so into the parlor, where stood the richly laden marble buffet.

She led him through the window, which she had previously raised for the purpose, into the conservatory, their way growing lighter by the occasional gleams of lightning. As they came to the steps leading into the yard, and where Shears had been taken by the watchman, Herman said:

"You mustn't go any further, Cecilia, for such is the pretty name you told me yours was, for the rain is too heavy! I can find the way to the gate myself."

"No, Herman," she said, firmly. "I am not afraid of the rain. I must see you safely out of the gate, and then I shall be relieved. As soon as you are out you will hasten to your mother, and I hope will never be found guilty of any wrong again."

"For your sake I will do better," he said, with warmth. "I can never do wrong as long as I can recall your pure sweet face to mind."

The young girl, or child, as she was, felt her cheek glow with a pleasing emotion from her heart as he said this; and throwing over her bright tresses a small shawl, she passed quickly down the steps, still guiding him by the hand. "I must see you safely out to close the gate after you, or I would leave you here."

Suddenly Herman heard his name on the outside of the gate. "Herman, is it you?" was repeated in a cautious tone.

"It is Shears," he exclaimed, partly opening the gate. "Fly back into the house, Cecilia, and close the doors and windows; but give no alarm yet."

The terrified girl turned to obey him.

"Not so fast, my pretty one," Shears cried, coarsely, as he drew her rudely toward the gate.

"Herman, save me. Father, save me," she shrieked, in piercing accents.

Shears gave utterance to a rough oath, and placed his hand upon her mouth to stop her cries. "This will not do. She must not be allowed to hollar in that style. The game is up in the house; but as she is the daughter of Mr. Carrol she will be worth a ransom. So, she must come with me, in spite of you or anybody else, Master Herman."

As Shears thus spoke, he took the young girl beneath his arm, and fled like a deer down the alley.

At the bottom of the lane stood a carriage, the door open and the driver on his seat with the reins in his hand. On reaching the coach, Shears sprung into it with his burden, crying as he did so:

"Drive for your life."

"Where?"

"Back again."

The carriage whirled from the spot, but not without taking up a third passenger upon the footboard behind. It was Herman. He reached the end of the alley just in time to spring upon the footman's stand behind it. The vehicle rolled through the streets at the greatest speed. Herman coolly formed a plan of action. Silently and steadily he cut a slit into the leather of the carriage behind, the rattling wheels preventing Shears from hearing the noise.

The opening Herman had made was wide enough freely to admit him, and he leaped through it, directly upon the burglar. Shears uttered a shout of terror, for Herman's grasp was upon his throat. "Shears, I would not kill you, but you must die. There is no other way!" said the boy, through his clenched teeth. Again all was darkness, and then a confused, sharp, and yet dull hollow sound, followed by a quick cry of pain and horror, told that the knife had penetrated the heart of the burglar. He fell back upon his seat, grasping at the air, and then sunk into the silence of death.

Herman, taking the young girl in his arms, placed her upon the back seat, and then getting through the opening he had made, he drew her out of the carriage in his arms, and stood upon the footman's stand, waiting for an opportunity to spring to the ground with her.

The vehicle had just passed the Bowery Theater, and was coming near the entrance to the winding lane in which he lived, when an omnibus passing delayed the carriage an instant. Herman sprung to the ground, with the insensible Cecilia in his arms.

In a few minutes Herman was at his mother's threshold, and gained admittance as the reader has already seen.

The consternation of the coachman upon reaching the rendezvous and opening the door of his carriage, on discovering that the burglar was lying dead upon the bottom of the vehicle weltering in his blood, and that the young girl he had taken into it with him was missing, it is impossible to describe. He shut the door, left his horses, and flew to the Burglar Captain, (for the driver was one of his organized band), to make known the horrible event, and Wilkins and the driver, after a brief consultation, concluded to drive to a distant pier, from whence they launched the body into the river.

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER LONG YEARS.

SEVEN years, lacking two months, had elapsed, since the night Herman de Ruyter entered the dwelling of his mother, bearing in his arms the lovely Cecilia, whom he had rescued from the hands of the burglar whom he strangely slew.

The mysterious absence of the young girl from the dwelling of Mr. Carrol created the most lively alarm and produced no little excitement in the city. The police were set upon the search, but after three weeks vain effort, Mr. Carrol gave up all hopes of ever seeing her again; yet with each hour's absence the mystery increased.

But in the meanwhile, the lovely girl remained an inmate in the house of Mrs. de Ruyter. Herman had told her the whole story concerning her from the first to the last, and how, to rescue her, he had taken the life of Shears. The poor woman trembled with alarm for the boy she idolized, and her first command the next day was, for him to get a coach and send her back to her father.

"You know, mother," said Herman, "that the officers will be searching everywhere for me; if she returns they will obtain a clew to my whereabouts. You must, therefore, start with us both—calling us your children, in the boat for Boston. There we must live quiet, till the thing is forgotten."

That very evening Mrs. de Ruyter disposed of her house and land for twenty thousand dollars, all but one thousand of which she left in trust of Mr. Wadleigh, the lawyer, at interest, to be paid over to her son, on his arriving at the age of twenty-one. Herman and Cecilia of course were not seen during this interview. The next morning Mrs. de Ruyter left New York, with Herman and the child, for Boston, representing them both to be her children.

At length, after nearly seven years' sojourn there, learning that Mr. Wadleigh was deeply involved, and fearing for her funds, she visited New York, fearing no danger, after so long an absence, to Cecilia. The latter was now seventeen years of age, and exceedingly lovely, with a pure blue eye, beaming with cheerfulness and good humor, a smile of fascinating brilliancy, a figure small but graceful as a sylph's, and altogether, an air of elegance, refinement and delicacy, that rendered her an object of admiration to every person who encountered her tripping along the streets.

Herman had also changed in the seven years. He had been with his mother the last four years but little, he having, after being in Boston three years, been recognized by a New York police officer, as a fugitive from Blackwell's Island, and only escaped arrest by striking the officer down.

He soon found he was a marked man by the police, and having had for some time, a desire to go to sea, he shipped on a voyage to India.

Meanwhile Mrs. de Ruyter grew poorer daily, and it was only by doing needlework, that they were able to insure daily subsistence. Cecilia one day picked up a daily paper, and looking over the advertisements, one caught her eye. The paragraph was as follows:

"Wanted, to tend a genteel cigar store, a young lady of prepossessing appearance and address, to whom good wages will be given. Apply at the dwelling house of the advertiser, No. 11 — street."

Cecilia immediately waited on the advertiser, and secured the situation.

She accordingly took her place behind the counter of the cigar store. The reputation of her charms, of her modesty, and of her exceeding grace in conversation, for she was alike affable to all, spread throughout the city, and the beautiful cigar-girl became the theme of every young man's conversation in the city. Hundreds visited there only to see her, and those who never smoked cigars, now lounged in there to purchase them, that they might behold her, who had turned the heads of half the young men in town. Her beauty impressed not only the gentlemen; for the ladies as they passed *en promenade*, would linger to glance in at the beautiful girl.

At this state of things, so propitious for our lovely heroine, suddenly the city was thrown into consternation by the appearance of this paragraph in one of the Monday morning papers:

"HORRIBLE SUSPICION OF MURDER!"

"It is with the deepest regret that we learn that the beautiful cigar girl, whose modesty and beauty

have so much interested the city, who kept for Mr. Anderson, has disappeared since Saturday evening, under circumstances that lead to a suspicion that she has been murdered. The police are already vigilantly upon the investigation, and there are certain circumstances which lead to the belief that the perpetrator of this horrible deed is known."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

It was but a few minutes past nine o'clock, three evenings previous to the sudden disappearance of the beautiful cigar-vender, when the keeper of a miserable book-stall, situated in a narrow thoroughfare leading from Pearl into Chatham street prepared to close his stall for the night. His stall consisted of some rude shelves placed against the wall of a low and wretched habitation, with a sunken door on one side of the shelves by which he had ingress from the sidewalk into a narrow apartment that served him as a dwelling place. There were shelves against the street wall on both sides of his door, a board placed in front of which, encroaching about two feet on the pavement, formed a sort of counter. It was supported at each end by rough empty boxes, in the cavity of one of which, upon a bundle of straw as it stood on end, facing inward, lay a small, ugly shock-dog, with a black turn-up nose, and most fiery little gray eyes. In the opposite box, *ris-a-vis* to the little spiteful dog, crouched a monstrous white Tom cat, with great green eyes, and a visage quite as savage as that of a panther. Thus with the counter and boxes supporting it, the keeper was inclosed in a sort of ingeniously constructed shop, which he had contrived to cover with a strip of canvas, which served as a shade from the sun as well as shelter from the storms. The contents of his shelves presented to the passer-by a singular assemblage of old books, pamphlets, songs, pictures of pirates and buccaneers, hung in yellow painted frames; two penny portraits of murderers and other distinguished characters in this line, with ferocious full lengths of General Jackson, and Colonel Johnson killing Tecumseh! Rolls of ballads, piles of sailors' songs of the last war, last dying speeches, and lives of celebrated criminals, were strewn upon the counter, to which was added a goodly assortment of children's picture-books and toys. Cigars, and even candy were displayed to tempt the various tastes of passers-by, and even gay ribbons, somewhat faded, exposed in a pasteboard box, were offered as a net to catch the fancy of the females who might glance that way.

The whole stall, with its treasures, was lighted by a tin lamp, suspended by a piece of twine from a nail above the door, which gave admittance to the little dark room behind the stall. The light fell full upon the person and features of the keeper as he lifted his face while removing from their places some of the prints which had garnished the rough wall of his tenement, preparatory to restoring them to a box in his room, from which he had taken them when he opened and arranged his stall in the morning.

This man was low in stature and squarely framed, with a high protuberance between his shoulders, nearly level with the top of his head. He was also lame, his left leg being shrunk and drawn up so that for the most part when he stood he stood on one leg, with difficulty touching the ground with the toe of the other when he walked. The man's head was finely shaped, and its expression intelligent. His hair was a soft brown, and curled with a grace and beauty about his neck that singularly contrasted with the unsightly aspect of his figure. He seemed to be proud of this, for it was trimmed and oiled with the greatest care, and arranged about his high, white forehead with the most fastidious taste. The features of the man were finely cut, were even noble in their cast; but a bitter sneer, a sinister, dark expression of indwelling malignity deformed them, and made them repulsive, and himself feared.

Yet this man had been born with a heart as gentle as an angel's, and he grew up with feelings overrunning with benevolence and love of his species. A fairer, purer, holier spirit of universal love never inhabited the human bosom. His eye beamed sweetness and tenderness upon all, and his heart, filled to the brim with love, sent forth a hundred streams to irrigate and enrich everywhere the soil of human affection. He loved all, and yearned for that sympathy with his love, which is love's nourishment! But as he grew from boyhood to manhood, as the dear, domestic circle, which had surrounded him with a chain of tenderest affection, link by link dropped away into the grave, and he was at length left exposed, without the covering shield of a mother's or sister's love, to the cold gaze and unfeeling mockery of the outer world, how, like the sensitive plant, his heart shrunk up and folded itself within itself! and his spirit withered as the flower withers before the sudden frost.

Then he learned his deformity! Then he learned that men despised him! Then he felt that he was not loved. How bitter was the anguish of that conviction! From that hour a change came over the amiable and loving spirit! His love gradually grew to a hatred as he grew to manhood, and he felt that he was at feud with

his kind. Yet, at times, as he struggled on for subsistence, for he had been left poor, he strove to find some one to love—some one to love him! His heart was yearning daily in secret for a soul kindred with his own! His only solace was books. He read, read, read, that in the world of others' minds he might become oblivious of the dark thoughts of his own.

When he was thrown upon his own exertions, and found every avenue to honorable exertion closed to him on account of his deformity, when he found that men turned from him with contempt, he ceased to mingle with men; he resolved to be independent of their favor. With a little money he purchased a few books, and placed himself near the park to sell them. He had no other stall than a basket. He read constantly. He asked no one to buy of him; he solicited no one's favorable attention to his little stock. Yet he sold a few books daily, and by degrees increased his store. He then opened a little stall in the quarter of the town in which Herman de Ruyter had lived, where he is first introduced to the reader. Time passed on, and we now find him, where he is again brought to our notice, in an obscure lane, in the act of closing his little stall. He had still yearned for the love of some one of his kind in vain. But he had found none, and then he sought the love of the brute creation; but even the noble dog he would have won to his side to love him with that attachment peculiar to his race, shunned his advances. At length, one day, the ugly little shock-dog, which now lay in the box by his side, being persecuted for his very ugliness by boys, fled for shelter under his stall. He extended to this miserable creature his protection, and from that hour the grateful animal remained with him and showed toward him the profoundest gratitude and most touching affection. Not long afterward he saw a man passing his stall with a hideous and fierce-looking cat, with a stone tied to its neck. The pitiable condition of the animal moved him to save her; for he felt that, like himself, she was an outcast. He prevailed on the man to surrender her to him, although warned that the fierce creature was too savage to be suffered to go loose. But from the day the deformed book-man took her she manifested toward him only the kindest attachment. Thus the three had lived together many months, being the whole family of the stall-man. By day they sat on either side of him, as he read in his books, or waited in silence on his customers; at night they shared his little room, one sleeping at his feet, the other at his head. Such was the character, person, profession, companions, and domestic arrangements of Rolf Brant, or "the Book-man," as he was most generally called.

He was in the act of removing his last parcel of musty books from his counter into his rear room in which, at night, this outcast of his kind safely locked up his goods, himself, and his two favorites, when a young man, in the dress of a seaman, who was passing by, stopped and gazed full and intensely on the form of Brant, whose back was toward him. The light of the stall lamp shone full upon the stranger, who was well dressed in a sailor's blue roundabout, open before, with full white trousers, a black handkerchief loosely knotted in front, and was without a vest, better to display his fine blue shirt, which lay in careless folds across his manly chest. He was tall and symmetrical, with a bold, free bearing, which was sustained by a fine dark countenance, shaded by locks of raven black hair that swept his shoulders. A moustache darkened his upper lip, and gave strength and energy to the expression of a face as determined as it was handsome.

He stood gazing upon the book-man with a look partly of recognition, partly of surprise. At length Brant turned half round to call to his dog and cat to follow him into the house. As he did so, and the features of his countenance were strongly revealed in profile under the lamp, the young man uttered an exclamation of recognition and pleasure. With a light curled rattan, which he carried, he reached over the counter and struck the stall-keeper lightly upon the shoulder to draw his attention. At the act the shaggy shock-dog, bristling up his back and showing his teeth, sprang from the box, uttered a fierce yelp of rage and vindictiveness, and, flying at him, fastened his sharp fangs in his leg, while the huge tom-cat leaped like a hyena upon his breast, and clung there mauling and spitting like an enraged ape, and savagely tearing at his bosom with her sharp claws. The book-man had also at the same moment turned to see who gave the blow.

"Rolf, man! Brant! What the devil—call off your cats and imps!" cried the young seaman, as he struggled to free himself from these assailants. "Do you mean an old friend shall be torn to pieces in this way?" And as he spoke he seized the huge cat in both hands by the throat, and with difficulty disengaged him, bringing away with his claws bleeding portions of his blue checked shirt. He was about to dash him to the pavement, and then liberate himself from the dog, which still vindictively tugged at his leg, when Rolf cried, pressing forward, and grasping the cat also:

"Herman—hurt him not! He is all I love, or

that loves me, save Pest. Away, Pest—let go, and into your house, sir!" he cried to the shock-dog, which, giving another sharp bite to the tendon he had fastened upon with his teeth, sulkily retired as far as the door, and there sat on his haunches, and with his long hair bristling like a porcupine's quills, contented himself with growling in a most snappish and ill-natured way. In the meanwhile the young man had released his hold on the tom-cat, and Brant had dropped him on the ground, saying kindly:

"Go in, Snowy—you are too quick, you and Pest, both of you!"

"Quick as the flash of a gun, Rolfe. What the devil do you keep such impish beasts about you for?" he demanded, stanching the trickling blood that flowed freely from the scratch on his breast, and stooping down to examine his ankle. "Confound that little black brute—his teeth are like needles; the fellow has met his jaws through the skin."

"I am sorry you have met with such a reception, Herman," said Rolfe, in a tone of more gentleness than was his wont. "Come in, and I will try and see what I can do for you."

"Never mind—they are mere scratches—mosquito-bites; they are sharp; but they are little fellows, those friends of yours, Rolfe, and are not worth noticing. The scratches will be well enough in a day or two; I am too impatient to think about anything till I learn where and how my mother is. I have just now, within the last hour, got in from two years' absence at sea, and was hastening to the post-office to see if there was any letter there from her for me. When I sailed she was living in Boston, and I have had letters from her and Cecilia until six months past, since when I have had not a word."

"You need not go to the post-office, to-night, Herman, as the hour for keeping it open has passed. Besides, your mother is now in New York."

"How do you know this?"

"I have seen her pass here often in that time, and always with such things in her hands as leads me to know that she keeps house, and is not visiting."

"And—and—my friend, who gives such good news, tell me, is she well—looked she well?" asked Herman, earnestly.

"I have now closed my stall, and your wounds are troublesome to you. Come into my little room, and with some cotton I have there I will stanch the blood, and then we will talk more at ease."

Herman stooped to enter the door of the low apartment, and the book-man, having taken down his lamp from the nail outside, closed the door, and turned a ponderous key in an enormous lock. There was no chair in the room, so Herman seated himself upon a heap of books, while his host occupied the side of the bed.

"It is a long time since we met, Herman," said Brant, after surveying the young man closely.

"Yet you knew me at the first glance."

"I never forget the faces of men," said Brant, with emphasis. "You recognized me at once," he added, with severe irony.

"Yes, Brant, I—"

"Enough. You need not tell me what I know—that God has given me Cain's mark! So you are returned from sea? You have grown; you are tall and noble-looking, Herman. Such as you are now you promised to be when you were a boy!"

"You have not changed, Rolfe," said Herman, looking at him closely. "Do you remember that it was you who first told me about my father's being in prison? From that day, Brant, the seeds of the devil's wickedness were sown in my heart."

"I remember that time. I pitied you then, Herman, when I saw the anguish with which you heard the tale of your father's criminal deeds. I told it to you not in malice, boy, for I was not then so profoundly the hater of my own species as I am now—yet I hate all men. I find that kindly feelings are still in my heart when I see you. You did me a kindness, then, and I have never forgotten it. You did me the only kind act that man has done me since my sister and mother died and left me a blot on God's earth for every heartless being, perchance, who stands erect, to spit his venom on!"

"You take it too much to heart, Brant. People don't hate you so much as you think—it is most in you fancy! But, what of my mother? When did you see her last?"

"On Monday morning."

"How did she look—well?"

"Thin and poor."

"Poor—it is impossible. She had means."

"Yet she looked poor and sad."

"I hope not. Did you speak to her?"

"I speak to nobody first, Herman."

"Was she alone always? Did you not see any one with her?" he asked, eagerly. "Tell me quickly, Brant!"

"But once have I seen her pass with any one," said the deformed, his countenance changing, and an extraordinary expression passing over it.

"And who—who was this—was it Cecilia?"

"Who do you mean, Herman? Once before

you spoke of Cecilia as having written you; of whom do you speak?"

"Why, it is my sister!" he answered, after a moment's hesitation, and deeply coloring; for he saw at once that any other confession would be imprudent.

"I never knew you had a sister. I knew your father: that is, as I knew other men; and I knew not that he had two children. It may be so."

"May be so! Do you doubt my word, Brant?" cried Herman, his handsome countenance darkening, and the indications of his fiery nature manifesting themselves in every lineament.

"No, Herman," answered Brant, a smile scarcely perceptible creeping about the corners of his sarcastic mouth. "No, Herman, I doubt not that you had a sister. Doubtless she has another mother than thine, eh?"

"Was the person you saw with my mother young and beautiful, and about—let me see—about seventeen she must be by this time?" asked Herman, letting the suspicion pass.

"You have described her, Herman," replied Brant, sighing, then recovering himself and frowning, and biting his lips.

"I saw her once, only once! Till now," he continued, "I knew not who she was! Thy sister! It is good, Herman. I thank thee for thy news." As he spoke the last words, his face assumed an expression of singular decision of inward purpose, and he seemed to have spoken absently to himself, rather than addressed them to Herman.

"Well, I am glad to hear from my mother. I can't imagine what can have brought her back to New York. But for meeting you I should have posted off to Boston to-morrow. Thanks, good Rolfe; now, if you can tell me how to find her out, I shall be your debtor doubly!"

"That I can't do, Herman; though she lives in this neighborhood, I am confident. I have wished to ascertain since the—" Here the dwarf suddenly checked himself, and added: "Since I saw she looked so poor; for I would gladly have assisted her for your sake, Herman. So she is his sister!" he added to himself, with a glowing cheek, and an eye and lip eloquent with some strange and deep emotion of the soul within. "So she is his sister! It may be, and may not be! 'Tis strange!"

"Well, Rolfe, good-night! You can't assist me further, and I must go where I can get information. Yet I don't know where to take the first step forward!"

"Herman," said Rolfe, suddenly, "do you recollect your father? Would you like to know that he was free? Would you like to see him?"

"Brant, I ought not to wish to see my father, but to curse him; for, but for his crime, I should not have been the man I am! I do not know; I cannot say whether I would like to see him or not! Is he at liberty?"

"I saw him pass here this very day."

"My father?"

"Yes."

"How looked he?"

"As he did fourteen years ago, though gray hairs were mixed with his black locks. He was something bent, yet his frame was strong, and his step bold!"

"How has he become free?"

"His sentence was for life; but, after serving fourteen years, the governor has pardoned him. I knew he was out, for I saw it in the papers last week."

"I would give much to see him!" answered Herman, with thoughtful earnestness. "I would give much to behold my father!" he added, with a deeper tone, that seemed to come from the depths of his chest.

"You will find him, doubtless, at the Saracen's Head, for I saw him in company with a rare villain who haunts there."

"I will see him, then," answered Herman, decidedly. "Think you my mother has met him?" he inquired, with a flashing eye.

"No. Yet 'tis possible, through him, you may learn where she is; as he would be likely to seek her out."

"Then I'll go at once to the Saracen's Head," he answered, going toward the door, which the stall-keeper opened for him.

"When you have made the discovery let me know, Herman. Now, good-night. I have entertained you as my guest, which I would never do for any other man."

Herman de Ruyter went up out of the low den which served the book man for his habitation, and rapidly took his way up the street in the direction of the Saracen's Head.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SARACEN'S HEAD.

THE "Saracen's Head," toward which Herman directed his steps, was situated at the head of the narrow street he was traversing, and in the neighborhood of the City Prison, the dark Egyptian walls of which towered high and frowningly above it. The building was two low stories in height, with a nip-roof and dormer windows, the roof steep and much broken in places, and the windows set with very small bull's eye panes. It had originally been square,

but various additions to its length on either wing had given it a rambling, overlaid look; and, as these additions were in every possible variety, they added much to its picturesque aspect, as well as increased the income; for the apartments, some under ground, some above ground, and some stuck upon the roof, like one cake placed a-top of another, being let out to various tenants, added not a little to the income of its economical landlord.

The renter of this rambling row of tenements was the hostess of the "Saracen's Head," who not only kept on the corner a famous tap-room, which she styled a "coffee-house," in red letters on a pink ground, placed over the principal door, but let "furnished lodgings" at eleven York shillings a week, or a "single bed" for ninepence. Dame Dilley, or, as she was better known, "Dirk Dilley," from her habit of carrying a dirk-sheath in her girdle, did not only let rooms to lodgers, but she rented, by the week and month, apartments in the more remote quarters of her habitation attached to the Saracen's Head. Thus she had under her miscellaneous union of roofs no less than nine families who rented rooms of her independent of the "coffee-house," poor people who furnished their own quarters, such furnishing as it was, and lived as they could, whether by theft or honest industry, Dirk Dilley never made it her business to inquire, so that she got her weekly dues for rent.

As Herman approached this rendezvous of vice, poverty and crime, he instinctively slackened his pace, for he did not know but he might the next moment meet his father, and the thought made his blood flow quicker, while it produced a certain emotion of reluctance and awe. Around the door were four or five persons smoking cigars and talking together. Two men, muffled about the chin and mouth, and wearing hats pushed down over their eyes, evidently for disguise, stood beneath the dull lamp which hung above the door of the "tap" conversing apart secretly. As Herman came up they lowered their voices and turned their faces away, shaded as the spot was where they were standing. He knew one of them, nevertheless, disguised as he was, and, approaching him, he laid his hand suddenly upon his arm. The man started back, and, throwing himself into an attitude of defense, half unsheathed a knife, the steel of which flashed on the eyes of De Ruyter. His companion, at the same moment drew from beneath his jacket a short, loaded cudgel, and held it above his head.

"Wilkins, is this the way to welcome an old acquaintance?" said Herman, in a lively tone and pleasant laugh, without betraying the least fear at their menacing demeanor.

"Who the deuce are you?" demanded the man he addressed, slowly shoving back his knife into its sheath and eying him closely. "If you know me, you ought to know that it is dangerous for a man to come up and lay a hand upon me in that way, by surprise. I might take his life before I knew whether he was friend or foe! Who are you?"

"Herman de Ruyter," he answered, firmly.

"Herman!" cried the Burglar Captain, with a recognition of surprise and pleasure. And seizing him by the extended hand, he shook it warmly. "You are the last man I expected to see here! No wonder I didn't know you. You were but seventeen when we last met, and now you are full three-and-twenty. But your way of carrying yourself is just the same, and you have an eye no man could mistake who had once seen it! You knew me readily. If I have been so easily detected I am not very safe here!"

"I heard your voice first, and then, looking at you closely, I recognized you. Perhaps I shouldn't have noticed you if I had not heard you speak!"

"Softly," said the Burglar Captain, lowering his voice.

"Come into the tap, Herman, my boy, and let us know where you've been! You are the very man I would rather see than all others! By the by, this is my particular friend, Napes."

Herman shook Mr. Napes by the hand, and then followed his two friends into the coffee-house, by descending four well-worn steps, the tap being three feet lower than the level of the street. The apartment into which Herman descended was a large-sized room, remarkable for its time-worn and smoky aspect, and for the lowness of its blackened ceiling. There were little blue tables ranged around the sides of the room, and every one of them was occupied by hard-looking characters, some card-playing, others drinking and puffing at short pipes or detestable cigars, others with their heads bent close together, conversing in low, cautious tones. A steady buzz, mingled with oaths of the most horrid character, and language singularly vile, filled the room, alternated with loud calls for glasses of wine or tumblers of spirits.

Dame Dilley stood behind her bar, the presiding genius of this Bacchanalian scene. Her appearance presented a striking contrast to all around her. She was a young woman not more than five or six and twenty, and still remarkably handsome, with a clear hazel eye, dark shining hair and

a superb figure. She was dressed in a tight-fitting black velvet spencer, with a green silk skirt, and a necklace of sparkling stones encircled her well-turned neck. She was at once beautiful and wicked; for the seal of vice was impressed upon her fine face in lines that could not be mistaken. In a word, the hostess of the Saracen's Head was Isabel Wild, once the wife of the Burglar Captain. After his sentence to seven years in State's Prison, her marriage to him was, by the law, annulled. She passed through various vicissitudes the first two or three years of her separation, but in all her circumstances was remarkable for her bold, daring, and independent spirit, and a propensity to defy the law, by engaging in lawless enterprises. Indeed, she took for a time the position Wilkins Wild had held, and was virtually the head of a band of burglars, for whom she planned enterprises, being artful, bold, and most accomplished in the management of conspiracies against the property of honest citizens. One of these, by the name of Dilley, she married; but he was shot not long afterward in breaking into a doctor's house in Washington square. Avarice grew with her acquisitions, and, in the collection of her rents, or bills for lodging or board, Isabel knew no pity. The last loaf of bread or the last blanket that appertained to her poor tenants, she would seize without mercy, if the hour of her dues came, and there was not money enough to pay.

As she stood now in her bar, not serving herself so much as overseeing the movements of a young girl who was in the bar with her, her hard, cold yet handsome eye, betrayed to a close observer all the iron-coldness of her nature. Yet it was not her nature. Isabel Wild was not always such as she now was; and, under other circumstances, would have made a noble woman. But early temptation and fall had reversed her character, and from a high-spirited girl, made a dangerous and guilty woman!

As Herman followed Wild up to the bar, she fixed upon him her quick glance, and a look of surprise and searching scrutiny of his features followed. He at once recognized her, and turning to Wilkins, exclaimed—

"There is your wife—Isabel."

"Not my wife now," answered Wild, laughing, yet looking confused and displeased. "The State's Prison gave us a bill of divorce. She has recognized you, and beckons me to bring you there."

Wild led Herman by the side of the bar into a small sitting room, into which Isabel instantly came.

"Is it possible," she exclaimed, with a smiling countenance, as she stopped a moment to survey Herman, "is it possible, Wild, you have brought little Herman here—is it he? That smile and glance nobody can mistake. How handsome and tall you have grown!" she added, as she approached him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder. "Where have you been?"

"At sea."

"Under the free flag, hey?" she said, laughing. "No," replied Herman. "I have been part of the time in a merchantman, and a part of the time in a man-of-war. I only got back from my last cruise to-night, and I want you to tell me, Isabel, where I can find my mother?"

"Your mother; bless me, you are too old to ask, after your mother, Herman!" she said, laughing. "She is not living, is she?"

"Yes, and is in the city."

"Well, I did not know it; besides, I never saw her in all my life. Where are you going to stop while you are here—you must remain at the Saracen? I have a neat room for you, and you will feel perfectly at home."

"Well, I will accept your kind offer," said Herman, "until I can ascertain where my mother is."

"Bell," said Wild, in an imperious tone, "bring us three glasses of your best. We will drink together in here, where it is private!"

"Who do you order in that manner, sir?" asked the hostess of the Saracen, her large eyes flashing, and her fine lip curling with contempt. "Your old tones won't do with me now, Wilkins; if you wish me to be your friend you will be less haughty. We are two now. If I suffer you to lodge here for old acquaintance' sake till you can do better—it is not for you to think that I am your wife!"

"Don't be angry, Isabel," said Wild, trying to laugh, though his brow darkened. "We will keep friends; come, my dear, get us the three glasses, and a fourth one too, for yourself."

"No—I will take a glass with a cup of tea by and by, alone with Herman."

"Alone, with Herman, eh?" repeated Wild, in a sarcastic tone, and with a look that showed, notwithstanding his present relative position with regard to her, he was jealous of her very apparent regard for Herman.

She smiled with wicked triumph in her eye, and entering the bar, in a few moments returned with the glasses, and carefully placed them upon the table before them. As she retired from the room, Wild rose up, and followed her to the bar.

"Isabel!"

"Well, Wild?"

"I see how the wards lay, and have a key in my eye that unlocks all your thoughts; I understand what you mean to be at!"

"Well, what is it?"

"You know Herman is rich, and will soon have his money. You see he is devilish-good-looking—so you mean to play a double game; getting him fascinated with you to gratify your vanity, and then work him out of his money?"

"If I thought it would make you jealous, nothing would please me more, Wild, than to fall in love with him. The truth is, I am almost in love with him; and I tell you plainly, if I can catch him I will marry him."

"Do as you please, only beware!" said Wild, his fine, yet vice-hardened face glowing with anger. "But look you, woman, about his money—there are two to play that game."

"How do you mean?"

"If you make me jealous of him, I will so manage my cards that you do not touch a dollar of his money. I know your avarice is stronger than your love, and so take heed—I do not, you well know, threaten lightly! If you wish to profit by his return, you must make me your friend."

"Well, Wilkins, I will not do anything to vex you—the truth is I love you still; but then my hatred of you for deceiving and degrading me in the first, is so much stronger than love, that sometimes it will come to the surface, and then I feel as if I could do any thing to make you suffer in soul and body!"

"Never make me jealous, Isabel," said Wild, in a stern tone, depressed so as not to be overheard by Herman and Napes. "If I can be nothing more to you than any other man, no other shall share your affections. Don't touch your dirk—it will not intimidate me! I am as desperate and determined as hell itself on that point. So if you would not make me your enemy, beware!"

He then turned away from her, while with a pale cheek, yet flashing eyes, she entered the bar.

"You and Dirk Dilley seemed to have hard words," said Napes, as Wild sat down by the table, and raised his glass.

"You seem to have been listening," retorted Wild, ill-humoredly. "But let us drink," he said, his brow clearing up. "Come, Herman, here's to your health."

"Wilkins," said Herman, as he sat down his glass, "can you tell me if—and here, looking doubtfully at Napes, he lowered his tone, and added, "if my father is in the city?"

"Bless me—I never thought of it before! That is true, sure enough—what a meeting it would be—I should like to be present at it."

"He is here, then?"

"Yes. But talk freely—don't be afraid of Napes. He knows all about you and the old 'un—he's served three years."

"Have you seen him?"

"Not half an hour ago. I dare say he is about now—I will see."

"No—by no means!" cried Herman, catching him by the arm, and detaining him. "I have not seen my father since I was a lad. I do not wish him to know me when we do meet—yet I would like to see him."

"You shall see him—he lodges here and has a room with Napes, in the court-yard, right over the arch. We will go up all three to his room soon and see him—I will call you Corney. He has heard me speak of such a person, and won't suspect."

"Thank you, Wilkins," said Herman, with an earnest voice. "I don't want him to know me, at least, yet."

"Well, now let us have a little talk together. How are you as it regards the old trade?"

"I have done with all that, Wilkins! I had enough when I was a boy, in that way, to serve me."

"Yes, you used to do service! By the by, was Shears killed before or after you left the city? Oh, I remember it was about the time; for you were together a night or two before! That was the strangest affair!"

"It was," responded Napes, with emphasis. "I would give a hundred dollars to know how the poor fellow came by his death!"

"Has the person never been suspected?" asked Herman, with as much composure as he could assume at such a moment.

"Never! unless it was a little girl whom he was known to take into the carriage with him. It seems impossible it could have been this child; and that afterward she should cut her way through the leather at the back of the coach. Yet the child disappeared at the same time, as if guilty; and her father or uncle, Mr. Curd, used every means to ascertain what had become of her. It is a confoundedly mysterious affair!"

Herman kept his countenance with remarkable coolness, and said quietly:

"It is very singular. I heard of the facts before I left."

"Shears was one in a thousand," said Wild, with admiration in his tones, as he recalled the many virtues of the skillful burglar. "I would not have lost him for a good deal of money."

Well, Herman, I suppose you are soon to be rich! I am not mistaken, eh?"

"I was to have about twenty thousand dollars when I came of age, which was nearly two years ago. I hope it is now safe; though, if I heard rightly, my mother is in the city and in poverty."

"It can't be true! But you will find her tomorrow, by dropping a line in the office. So, you will cut us all after you get your money, I dare say."

"No, I shall not cut you," he answered, smiling; "but there will be no need that I should take a hand with you."

"Ah, the same old frank, bold spirit, I see! You are Herman still! Going to sea hasn't spoiled you."

"It has made me reflect a good deal. I intend to stay ashore quietly, marry, and live as happily as I can."

"Here's to your good resolutions," cried Wild, filling his glass.

At this moment a noise without and a loud shriek caused them to rise and rush precipitately into the tap-room.

CHAPTER XIV. TO THE RESCUE.

BEFORE explaining the scene that met the eyes of Herman and the others, upon entering the tap-room, we will first take the reader to the tenement occupied by Mrs. De Ruyter and her young friend, the lovely cigar-vender. Upon the second floor of an old, black, wooden house, Mrs. De Ruyter had hired a room for herself and her *protegee*. It was furnished in the humblest manner, and one bed in the room served for her and the maiden. In spite of the poverty which manifested itself in the chamber, there was an air of neatness that pervaded the whole. Cecilia had been then a few weeks in the cigar store, and her little wages had been carefully contributed toward the comfort of her foster-mother. There was a small mirror over a table covered with neat white dimity, and a white coverlet to the bed, and clean curtains to the two low windows; all of which were presents from Cecilia, made out of the avails of her weekly wages.

It was a little after nine o'clock in the evening, and about the time that Herman had entered the tap of the Saracen's Head, that Mrs. De Ruyter was seated at a table sewing by a small lamp. Upon a seat a little lower and close by her side, sat the lovely girl whom we have chosen as the heroine of our tale. She was reading a letter aloud; and, as at intervals, she would lift up her eyelids from the paper, and fix her deep blue eyes upon the face of her maternal friend, to listen to some remarks she made upon the contents of the epistle, the expression was heavenly, from its innocence and purity. She was very beautiful; but it was the beauty of the retiring daisy, rather than of the glowing rose. She was attired, with great simplicity, in a muslin dress, with a pink flower in it, and in her bosom was stuck a sprig of myrtle and a forget-me-not. Her voice, as she read, was sweetly toned, and, at times, was slightly tremulous, for she was reading over again, at Mrs. De Ruyter's request, the last letter, received many months before, from Herman, dated at Valparaiso, and there were passages in it breathing the most passionate tenderness toward her.

"Nay, read that passage over again, dear," said Mrs. De Ruyter, laying down her work upon her knee, and fixing her eyes upon the letter, "read it again, my child!"

"Never forget, my dear mother," obeyed the maiden, and blushing as she obeyed, "that Cecilia must be guarded by you as your own child, as you promised me when I parted from you. She is very, very dear to me! I love her as a sister, ay more than a sister; and it is only the hope, that one day I may be united to her by a bond still tenderer than that of brotherly love, that leads me on in my career of usefulness! But for her, I feel I should forever have cast myself away on learning my father's crime. But I feel differently when I think of Cecilia. Her image—"

"Why do you stop, my child? These words are very sweet to my heart, and I know you will rejoice to be so loved by my boy!"

Cecilia sat pale and silent. She looked distressed, and said hurriedly:

"I will not read any more to-night, dear mother, if you will excuse me. The light is dim, and I do not feel quite well."

"Then fold up the dear boy's letter. I know you have to work hard all day, and stay until eight o'clock, and sometimes later, in the evening. I don't wonder your head aches. The smell of so much tobacco would make mine ache constantly. Besides, you haven't been home long enough to get rested. There, the lamp is going out! I forgot to get any oil to-day. Will you remain here alone, dear, while I go to the store on the corner, over against the Saracen's Head."

"You must not go, mother," said Cecilia, rising quickly, and taking the little oil pitcher from her hands, and throwing her shawl over her head, was going out, when the forget-me-not fell out of her bosom upon the floor.

She stooped to pick it up, when Mrs. De Ruyter anticipated her, and as she took it in her hand, before returning it to her, she said:

"This is beautiful. Where did you find such a sweet flower? It is a rare sight for me to see a flower in these days. It reminds me of my garden at the old place. Where did you get it?"

"It was given to me," answered the maiden, coloring, and rubbing her eyelids.

"I hope you did not receive it from any of the young gentlemen who frequent your shop. I cannot caution you too closely, my sweet child, about the society you are under the necessity of seeing there. Nay, don't look grieved! There it is, dear. If you don't care to tell how you came by it, I will not press you," added Mrs. De Ruyter, kindly. "I know you would not have received it from any young man, especially after Herman's letter."

"I am afraid the lamp will go quite out before I can get back with the oil," said Cecilia, placing the flower in her bosom beside the sprig of myrtle; and without making any further reply, she left the room and closed the door.

"This is the last night," said Cecilia, "I shall have to go in and out of this wretched place. The two pretty rooms in Nassau street I have engaged, and secretly furnished with my wages, will be ready to-morrow afternoon; and then how I shall surprise my dear Mrs. De Ruyter by taking her there to see them, and then telling her they are her own! I can almost see her happy and grateful countenance beaming upon me with thankfulness and love. Ah, this flower! I wonder if she suspects truly the truth! Oh, if she knew, she would be very angry with me! But how could I refuse him? so noble in looks, so agreeable, so handsome! and I know he is so generous and good! And how should I have answered my mother, when I know not even his name myself?"

With these pleasant thoughts of some one who is yet a stranger to us, but of whom the maiden knew more than she was willing to confide to her from whom, up to this time, she had kept no emotion of her heart, she tripped lightly along the murky sidewalk, her delicate features nearly concealed by the shawl which she drew closely down over her forehead, and round her chin; for the walk was thronged with idlers of all classes, who were lounging about, or coming in and out of the low lodging-houses and tipping-cellars that lined the way. She proceeded very rapidly along on her errand, fearing to be accosted by some rude person, and was passing the long row of tenements composing the "Saracen's Head," when the door of the tap-room opened, and a man was coming out, when the glare falling directly upon the face of Cecilia as she tripped past, revealed to him a glimpse of its beauty.

"Ha, my bright eyes!" he cried with drunken triumph, as he sprang and seized hold of her shawl, "let us have a sight of that pretty face."

The maiden, alarmed, uttered a half-cry, and releasing the shawl from his grasp, fled toward the grocery. As she was leaving the curb-stone to cross the street to it, another person who had seen the act of the man, suddenly placed himself in her way, and with outspread arms tried to receive her flying form. She turned from him, now fairly affrighted, and was about to escape by turning down the street, up which, a little before, Herman had come from the bookman's stall, when a third person, seeing her terror, intercepted her course, and attempted to pass his arm around her graceful waist. At this instant, when all hope of avoiding the rude insults of these desperadoes seemed gone, the other door of the tap was thrown open by a woman, who was coming out with a bottle in her hand. At the sight of one of her sex, and the open door, the alarmed girl sprang toward her.

"Protect me, good woman, from these wretches!" she cried, clinging to her.

"Och, and what is it you fare from the min?" demanded the woman, coarsely, in a strong Irish brogue. "Don't be after claverin' me wid yer hands!" and thus speaking, she drew back from her.

At the same moment the man who had first alarmed her came up, and was laying his hand upon her arm, when she pushed past the unfeeling Irishwoman into the tap, and sprang down the two steps through the still open door into the smoky and crowded room.

No sooner did she discover the character of the place she had sought shelter in than she trembled with renewed apprehensions, and was about to fly through the door again, past the men who were entering after her, when she was caught by the wrist, and drawn forcibly back into the room.

"Here is a canary bird that has broke loose from its cage!" cried the fellow who had seized her. "Don't sing so loud, pretty one, nobody is deaf here!" But the voice of the terrified girl rose louder, shriek after shriek, for three cut-throat looking villains had hold of her, and knives were already drawn above her head in fierce rivalry for the possession of her.

It was the shrieks of the trembling girl that reached the ears of Herman, the Burglar Captain, and Napes in the little back room of the tavern, and which led them to leave their glasses,

and rush out to ascertain the cause. The room being illy lighted, and its atmosphere thick with tobacco smoke, and the inmates of the tap thronging toward the door to see what was going on, Herman at first was unable to discover the cause; but being one of those ready spirits that are ever foremost in a quarrel or scene of excitement, he pressed his way through the crowd, imperiously saying, as he did so:

"Stand aside, fellow—clear the passage! give me room, villains!"

And in this way, helping his words with strong arms, he soon reached the scene. There was a battered japan lamp hanging just above the door, and casting its light down upon the spot where the maiden stood, pale as marble and trembling with apprehension. Two men now only had hold of her, one grasping each arm, while with knives brandished in the air, they stood eying each other with fierce and murderous hate.

"By Heaven, I will kill the girl unless you let go of her, Plymp!" vociferated one of them, and he lowered his knife till the point hung just above her bosom.

"Let go of her yourself, Flash," cried the other, furiously.

Herman came near enough to see the features of the young girl, over whom this desperate quarrel was going on, and instantly all the blood in his heart rushed to his brain. Could it be possible? The features, pale and alarmed as their expression was, were those which he had carried with him, in his "heart of hearts," during all his wide wanderings. The recognition acted upon his brain with the force of a blow being given upon the temples. He staggered a step backward, but instantly recovering himself as he saw the dreadful situation she was in, he uttered a loud cry, so loud and terrible that those around him started aside; and as a lion leaps upon his prey, he bounded upon these men. He had no weapon in his grasp; he seized a hand of each of them, heedless of their knives, and bending their wrists till they relaxed their brutal hold upon her shoulders, he hurled them both from him, one to this side, and the other to that side, as if they had been children in his grasp; and with the same act he threw his arm around the half lifeless maiden, and drew her closely to his side, and with the other arm presented in fierce defiance, he cried:

"Stand back, ruffians, both of ye—all of ye! He who lays a hand upon this young girl is a dead man!"

The two men, recovering themselves and seeing him unarmed, sprang at him together, with their gleaming blades, when Wild and Napes caught their hands, and held them, each securing one of them.

"How is this, Plymp—Flash! Put up your knives. Would you kill the best fellow that ever worked a clasher?"

"He!" cried Plymp, in a tone of contempt, "he a clasher?"

"Yes, and one of us, and the girl is his sister! So quit this game, and be hanged to you!"

"Just as you say, Wilks," answered Plymp, sheathing his weapon, and followed in the act by Flash, while both closely regarded Herman.

"Who is he, Wild?" asked Flash, a short, fat young man, of five or six-and-twenty, dressed in a torn bottle-green coat, the worse for wear, a soiled velvet waistcoat, and buff cassimere pants, much too tight for his legs, and a threadbare, greasy blue broadcloth cap, jauntily worn to one side, with a faded gold tassel dangling over his left ear.

"Ay, who is he, Wilks? I'm blowed if I know him!" repeated the other gentleman, shutting up his left eye, and eying Herman inquisitively with the right.

"Come to Napes's room, both of you, and I will tell you, boys," answered Wild, in a conciliating tone, speaking low. "Depend upon it, he is one of us, and you will find it for your interest to be friends with him. You have seen already that he has the courage of an eagle, and that he would make a dangerous foe."

"Well, if you say so, Wilks, I am content. I can't go to Napes's room to-night, as Flash and I have a little fancy work cut out, and I was going to look after it when I saw this pretty wench who has made such a muss, tripping by like a kitten goin' visitin' on a Sunday afternoon. If she is his sister, then I'm sorry. So comrade, give us your flipper," he said, addressing Herman, who had all this time been soothing and encouraging his recovered treasure; for she seemed to him ready each moment to sink to the ground, being yet ignorant who her timely friend was, and fearing still she was in the grasp of one from whom she had quite as much to fear as from the others—for, in the confused state of her faculties, she had been hardly conscious of what actually passed around her while Herman was rescuing her.

"Revive, and speak for my sake, dearest Cecilia!" he said, with anxiety and deep tenderness, as he gazed upon her marble and still features. "It is Herman who speaks to you—Herman who holds you!"

"I sav, friend, give us your fives," repeated Plymp, in a louder tone. "No harm meant, and none done, I hope!"

"Stand back, fellow, and don't friend me!"

cried Herman, angrily. "When I cross hands with you, it shall be as thy foe, and with a knife in them, for I mean yet to wipe out the insult you have put upon this fair girl by laying your savage grasp upon her person. Away, I want nothing with you! Open the door some of you, and give her air!"

He was obeyed, and bearing his burden to the passage, she felt the night air upon her brow, and lifted her eyelids. He bore her in his arms out of the sunken tap, and gained the sidewalk with her. Flash and Plymp would have rushed after him, but Wild placed himself against the door, which he shut the instant Herman had gone out.

After a few words interchanged aside, between the two burglars and Wild, the former left the tap together, as they said, to proceed on a private burglarious expedition of their own; while the latter, following them out, said he would go and see how his friend got home with his sister, and give him a helping hand if it were needed.

CHAPTER XV.

CECILIA'S SECRET.

THE night air served to revive the lovely girl whom Herman had so courageously rescued from the ruffians in the tap-room of the Saracen's Head; and, after he had supported her a few steps along the sidewalk with his arm around her, she stopped, and drawing back, said faintly:

"Sir, you are, indeed, very kind; but I can proceed alone. It is but a few steps. You are very good to do what you have for me."

"Cecilia, is it possible you do not know me?" exclaimed Herman, with suspicion. "It is me—Herman."

"Then it was not a confused dream of my bewildered brain, as I was in that horrible den. I thought I heard and knew your voice," she cried, with joy. "Herman, it is you!" she added, looking up into his face, as the street-lamp fell upon it and revealed the look of tenderness and love with which his eyes were bent on her. And, taking both his hands between hers, she pressed them with the warmth of sisterly affection. "How happy you will make your mother."

"Is she well, Cecilia?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes, and lives but a few steps off."

"I will hasten to see her. But how is it I found you there? How is it I have met you in this situation? Why is it you are in New York at all?" he asked, with a tone of anxiety.

In a few words she told him the object of her errand, and how she had been insulted and driven into the Saracen's Head for shelter and protection.

"Sad protection you were likely to find there," he said, as she ended. "Thank God I was near you to save you from these villains."

"I can never be too grateful to you, Herman," she answered, with warmth. "Come, here is the door."

"This? What a wretched abode! Is my mother so poor?" he exclaimed with pain, as he surveyed the wretched exterior of the habitation.

"Yes, Herman, she is very poor. But you shall know all when you have seen your mother. Let me go first in and break the news, or her heart will break for joy on seeing you."

"That is right and prudent—just like yourself," he said, pressing a kiss upon her brow, as they stood together in the doorway.

She shrunk instinctively from him, so that he could not but observe and speak of it.

"You did not once shrink from my kiss, Cecilia."

"We were children, then, Herman. But let us not quarrel now," she said, with a pleasant laugh. "I will run up and tell mother the news."

"And I will go into the next shop and purchase some candles, as you say there is no light up-stairs."

"You are very, very kind, dear Herman," she said, as she tripped lightly up the dark stairway.

"Dear Herman," he softly repeated to himself. "That little phrase makes all square again. I had begun to fear she might have found somebody during my absence she loved quite as well as Herman. Her refusing a kiss was only maiden coyness; and as she says she is not a child now, she is a lovely girl indeed. She has grown taller and fairer. I begin to think she is too far above me, she looks so lovely, and pure, and good."

Thus reflecting within himself, he went and purchased the candles; and having lighted one, he returned to the door, where he found Cecilia waiting for him.

"Have you broken it to her?" he asked, eagerly.

"Yes; gently as I could."

"And where is she?"

"On her knees in prayer, waiting for you."

Herman felt his bosom glow with the fire of filial devotion and awe, when he heard these words, and reverently ascended the stairs, preceded by Cecilia carrying the lighted candle. She opened the door and, standing aside, let him enter.

Mrs. De Ruyter rose from her knees, and unclasping her hands, stood gazing an instant, and then rushed toward him.

"My son—my boy—my Herman!"

"Mother—dear mother!"

For a few moments mother and son stood locked in each other's arms in silence and both in tears, while Cecilia freely wept for joy. At length composure was restored to each, and the three sat down; the mother by her long absent boy's side, his hand in hers, her eyes on his, and the maiden upon a low stool a little removed from them, and gazing upon both with looks of equal affection.

They listened to his brief account of his voyage home, and his arrival that evening in port, and then how he happened to meet with Cecilia so singularly while he was searching for them without any clue to direct his steps.

"But it was certainly very imprudent, dear mother, for you to let Cecilia go out at such an hour, in a neighborhood like this."

"I would have gone, Herman dear, but she would not suffer me to."

"And I am used to being out after dark, Herman," said the maiden, smiling.

"How, and for what?"

"Because, Cecilia has a place, Herman, and she seldom leaves it till eight o'clock, and sometimes stays later."

"A place! I don't understand you. But now I think again where I am, and look at this wretched chamber, I begin to comprehend! Is it possible Cecilia works out as a servant?"

"Not that—oh, no, Herman," exclaimed his mother.

"Then do explain, one of you," he cried impatiently, and looking from one to the other. "How is it you are in New York? How is it you are so poor—so utterly destitute? I learned something of this from Rolfe the bookman."

"Rolfe the bookman," repeated Cecilia in a voice of surprise, and a look of alarm, while her color fled.

"Yea. He first told me that you were here, dear mother, in this city, though I could hardly believe it, and had seen you pass in the garb of poverty; and he also described a young girl, whom I now know was Cecilia."

Herman did not take notice of the effect his words in allusion to Rolfe had upon Cecilia, being too deeply interested to have an answer to his inquiries.

"There is a long and sad story, Herman my son. You must make up your mind to suffer a great disappointment."

"There is but one thing that can be a subject of disappointment to me in this life, mother," he said, bending his warm glance upon the maiden, who, feeling it, dropped her eyes and looked distressed. "Let your story be short, and let me hear the worst. So it does not affect you and Cecilia, I am careless of the consequences."

"Then know, Herman, that Mr. Waldeigh has proved unfaithful. He has failed and become bankrupt, and every dollar of your money, with the income you reserved for my use, is lost. It was this that led me to come to New York, and which has reduced us to the indigence you find us in."

"Is this man living?" demanded Herman after a few moments severe thought; for the intelligence produced no other effect upon him than darkening his brow and compressing his lips. "Is this man—this Mr. Waldeigh, my trustee—living?"

"Yes; and rumors say he is still rich. I have been several times to see him but could never gain admittance. He did leave the city at one time, but returned again."

"Very well, dear mother, let him drop just now," he said, in a quiet manner. "Something must be done to make you and Cecilia more comfortable. This house will never do. Fortunately I have six hundred dollars of my own with me, and this is yours, mother. To-morrow I will have you out of this hole."

"Now, then, I will tell you, Herman, and mother, also, what I have been doing," said Cecilia with a brightening smile, and blushing at the reflection of her own good act. "I meant to surprise dear mother, but as you have come, I may as well tell."

"Ah, something good, I know that, my beloved child," said Mrs. De Ruyter, with kindly praise: "you are always trying to make me happy. Well, child, God will reward you. You will never suffer while you love so to provide for the happiness of those around you."

"You think too much of the little I can do for you, mother. I have received since my tenth year, all I have had from you. I can repay you nothing by all that I can do. But I see brother Herman is impatient to know what great things I have been doing."

"I am most impatient to know where you have a place, and why you have got one!" answered Herman.

"You shall soon hear! What I have been doing is to hire two pleasant rooms in Nassau street with my wages, which I have furnished neat and comfortably, and got everything ready for dear mother to go with me to them to-morrow!"

"There, Herman," cried Mrs. De Ruyter,

with the deepest admiration and gratitude, looking first upon Herman and then upon our heroine, "that is Cecilia perfectly! You see from this what she is to me, and what she has been to me since you left! But for her, life would have been dreary. She has been an angel beneath my roof."

"You cannot say one word that will cause me to think more of Cecilia than I do now," said Herman, enthusiastically, and endeavoring to pour into her eyes the floods of affection (more than brotherly) that flowed from his heart to her own. But she reservedly cast down the lids, and, with a deep blush, said:

"Now, Herman, I will tell you about my place. I hope you will not blame me if you do not like it; but then—"

"But then what, my daughter? Why do you begin with an apology? We should have perished, but that you took this place at the greatest sacrifice of feeling, from a sacred sense of duty."

"Let Cecilia speak, mother! My heart bleeds for the suffering that has driven either of you to any sacrifices."

"I will speak for her, Herman, for I can speak best of her good and noble conduct," answered Mrs. De Ruyter. "We were so reduced, and I being sick, that I had no means except what Cecilia's needle earned; and soon the confinement affected her health; when she would either have had to give it up, or seek something else. Well, she saw a place advertised in a paper, and thinking, perhaps, she would just suit it, she applied, and engaged herself in it, without my knowledge. She has been there now about three months, and received good wages, and the people are respectable and kind to her. The only drawback is, that it is very public, and she has to encounter the gaze of young men, and to stay out late, for she is wanted evenings as well as by day. She doesn't, however, go till ten in the morning, and so she helps me much at home. You have seen already what she has done with her wages over what we don't need to consume."

"What place is this, mother? a milliner's?"

"No, Herman!"

"Why this hesitation? Is it a tailor's?"

"No!"

"I will tell you, brother," said Cecilia, calmly, seeing him surprised and impatient at the apparent reluctance of his mother to reveal the character of the situation she held. "I will tell you, Herman, and perhaps you may blame me, as a modest girl, for taking it; but I had no alternative, and you may be assured that in no instance have I been treated by any one who has entered the shop otherwise than with that respect that modesty and a pure heart always command! The place I am in is a retail cigar store!"

"A retail cigar store!" he repeated, starting from his chair. "You in a place like that!"

"It is very respectable, Herman," said his mother. "It is on Broadway, and only resorted to by the most genteel company."

"Worse and worse, worse and worse!" he repeated with an angry brow. "I don't know what else would not have been better!"

"But how could it be helped?" said his mother sternly. "How could it be helped, when we were perishing for food?"

"But consider, mother, this young pure girl! consider Cecilia is so guileless, so beautiful, placed in a situation surrounded with such great dangers. Consider the peril to her reputation! Were she fair as the lily, the breath of slander would blast her fair fame forever! Oh, Cecilia, would to God you had reflected, ere you had taken this step!"

"But, Herman, there was no bread in the house—nay, no house to shelter us. You are unreasonable."

"Yes, yes, I know it. I know it, mother," he said despondingly and sadly. "I know it. You were poor and I, your protector, was away. I must blame only myself. But this is the last day she remains there!" he cried, with determination.

"Nay, dear Herman," answered Cecilia, mildly, and laying her soft hand gently upon his shoulder, for he had resealed himself, and sat with his forehead pressed upon his hand: "I have yet four days more to complete my first term of engagement, which was for three months. Then, if you desire it, prove but your wishes to me, as those of a brother; then, if you wish it, I will leave. I should break my engagement, and do Mr. Anderson an injury, by not going to-morrow."

"Well, to-morrow and the other three days, and then no longer," he said, taking her hand in his. "You have no idea, Cecilia, how dear you are to me, and how fondly I have cherished your image in my heart. The idea of your being exposed to slanders, surmises, and the rude impertinence of fashionable fops, almost makes me mad. But I know you have conducted yourself like yourself, and as I would wish to have you under such trying circumstances. But in a few days it will be past. Pardon my quickness. Instead of censuring you, I ought to kneel to you for your goodness to my mother. I ought to kneel to you as the preserver of her life!"

"Nay, Herman, your feelings with reference to the exposed situation I hold are natural. Any brother, and are you not my brother, would feel as you do on making the discovery. I have had much to try me there; but the consciousness that I was serving her who had been as a mother to me, kept me from yielding to the tears that a hundred times a day gushed upward to my eyes."

"Then you have been often insulted, or your feelings wounded. They must have been, though you have said to the contrary. I wish I knew of one who had dared to—"

"Herman, be calm!" said Mrs. De Ruyter, in a whisper. "I know that you have no reason to be suspicious in this way. Who, seeing Cecilia's pure face, and looking into her heavenly blue eyes, where modesty and virtue dwell as if in their own home, would presume to insult her?"

"I know it, mother; but there are brutes!" answered Herman, in a deep tone. "But let this pass. We will have all things smooth again soon. In four days more—nay, perhaps to-morrow, for I can buy off your time, Cecilia, I dare say."

"I would rather remain till it is out. Mr. Anderson has been very kind to me, and I ought to give him time to get some person to supply my place."

"You are right, I dare say. Then let things remain as they are. To-morrow I will assist mother to move into your nice rooms. I can go for you at night to come home with you. You have not come alone, and into such a quarter as this, I hope?"

"No; sometimes Mr. Anderson came with me, and sometimes—sometimes—" here she hesitated, and then added, "a friend walks with me to the door."

Herman was of a quick, jealous temperament. He did not like the word "friend," and was about to put some searching inquiry to her touching her friends, when a low tap was given upon the window; for, although the room was in the second story of the house, the street had been so raised that one passing on the walk could with ease rap upon the window-panes with a stick. It was in this way the knock was given.

"Who can that be?" said Herman, rising, and looking out. By the faint glimmer of a street lamp on the next corner he recognized the figure of Wilkins Wild, who had followed him from the Saracen's Head. Wild beckoned to him on seeing him.

"Excuse me, I will return in a moment," he said, and he went down to meet him.

"Ah, me! How that secret knocking outside reminds me of old times when Herman was at home," sighed Mrs. De Ruyter. "I trust that he has not already fallen in with any of his old associates. Ah, Cecilia, I look only to you to save him from temptation! You heard how he said he had never ceased thinking of you, and how your image was graven on his heart, and how the thought of you kept him from wickedness when he was tempted to it! I am so happy to think that he loves you so. This love for you will be his salvation! All I wish is to see you married and happy before I am removed! Did you see how calmly he took the loss of his money, when I thought he would rave and storm? and then how beautifully he said, 'only one thing would disappoint or make him unhappy,' and while he spoke he fixed his eyes on you full of hope and love. I am glad you both love each other, and that you will, for your own sake, too, try to keep him from temptation, now he is back again."

"I love Herman as a brother, dear mother," said Cecilia, evidently pained at the words of Madame De Ruyter, and looking distressed. "I trust he only regards me as a sister."

"Yes, as a sister, dear, and also as a wife!"

"I can never love Herman other than as a sister loves a brother, dearest mother!" said the maiden, firmly, but turning quite pale. "If I thought he regarded me with any tenderer emotions than should find a place in a brother's bosom, I should feel unhappy. But, alas! I fear he does, and that I shall find unhappiness and sorrow follow from his error!"

"But Herman looks upon you only as his future wife, dear Cecilia! He loves you devotedly. He believes you love him."

"Then he must be undecieved, mother," answered she, with calmness and decision.

"Never breathe it to him, never! If your feelings are such, never let him know them, child! It would be terrible! I don't know what he might not do. The idea that you love him is all that, with his fierce and intractable nature, keeps him under any restraint. But for this belief, I have no doubt he would have become a pirate in distant seas! But for it to cheer him now, he will be a desperate man. To hear you say what you have said, makes my heart bleed, and wrecks all my hopes! But, perhaps you will feel differently by and by!"

"Never, dear mother! I love Herman as a brother! I am grateful to him for his kindness and attachment to me. But I can only return him a sister's affection."

"Then, if you love me, child, keep Herman ignorant of this. To know it would drive him to some desperate act! But have you not another

in your heart, Cecilia?" she asked, suddenly questioning the lovely and embarrassed girl.

She was about to make some confused reply, when Herman entered and said he had to go away on some business, and, as he could not be lodged there, he would return and see them in the morning. He then hurriedly departed, and the next moment the steps of two men were heard moving up the street.

CHAPTER XVI.

FATHER AND SON.

THE person who had knocked upon the window to draw the attention of Herman was Wilkins Wild. When Herman went down to him, he was standing upon the sidewalk, close by the door.

"Herman," said he, in an eager tone, "you say you would like to see your father? He has just gone by toward the Saracen. He was hurrying so that he did not see me. If you come with me I can show him to you, and introduce you as my friend Corney! He will be in his room, for that is his stronghold!"

"Thank you, Wilkins. I wish of all things to meet my father," answered Herman, with deep emotion. "I will just go in and bid my mother and sister good-night."

"Then that was your sister and your mother who lives here!" observed Wild, after Herman had gone up-stairs and returned and taken his arm.

"Yes, I found her through my sister, whom I met so strangely!"

"Then that was your sister. Do you know I think I have seen her before and under circumstances that made a deep impression upon me! Yet it could not be her, but somebody very like! Whether it was, in truth, a person or a picture, I am not certain; but the face haunts me."

At his first speaking Herman thought he might have seen her in a cigar-store, but when he mentioned a picture, his heart leaped to his mouth; for he recollected that Wilkins's account of the picture of the lovely child he had seen at Mr. Carroll's, first led him to be interested in her. And he trembled at the thought that he might, by some accident, make his memory perfect, and fully identify Cecilia as the original of the picture, and, of course, as the young girl who had so mysteriously disappeared at the same time of Shears's murder, and whom Wild had hinted might have been, possibly, its perpetrator!

To prevent him from dwelling upon this dangerous subject, which, if pursued, and Cecilia identified by him, would place her wholly in his power, if he chose to use his information, Herman said quietly:

"How did my father look? Was he well clad?"

"He looked pretty hard used, my boy! But you will see him for yourself. Here we are at the Saracen. Come in. Not that door; but by this private entrance down through the cellar! He always goes straight to his room first, and then if he finds the tap is clear he goes down. Take care of your head as it is low, and lay your hand upon my shoulder, as it is as dark as a dungeon! There, we are into the light again in the court. Now mount these stairs and step carefully, for they are rickety. It is the third door along the platform."

"Whose room?"

"Your father's!"

Here Wild struck upon a door twice heavily.

"Who is it?" demanded a deep voice within.

"The captain!"

"Ay, ay! come in," answered the voice; and the sound of a bar removed from the door was heard, and the door cautiously opened a little way and the occupant peeped out.

"Two of you!" he said, in a surprised tone, pressing the door closer; "who is the other?"

"A friend—Corney; you have heard me speak of him."

And opening the door he let them in, and carefully closed and barred it after them.

"You are cautious to-night, Ruyter," said Wild, in a careless tone.

"I have been at work, and made a miss of it, and the bounds are abroad."

"Ah, that is bad—but you are safe enough here! What have you been doing?"

"I bade a gentleman 'stand' at the corner of Barclay street, and he gave me his purse with one hand, knocked me down with the other, and sung out for the watch. But I got to my feet, rolled two of the Charlies into the gutter, and so got clear!"

"With the purse?"

"Yes, here it is!" he answered, jingling in his hand a handsome scarlet silk purse. There are thirty dollars in it."

While he was talking, Herman was silently regarding his father's features. He was seated by a rude table on which burned a tallow candle in a wooden socket. The light struck upward against his features and gave to them a sharp, sinister cast that was revolting. Yet he could trace in that dark countenance, disfigured by uncontrolled evil passions, remains of manly dignity and beauty. He was a man about five-and-forty, heavily framed, and wearing long gray and black hair flowing upon his shoulders.

His eyebrows were thick and bushy black, and beneath them glowed dark eyes of the most viciously hardened expression. Crime and years of imprisonment, during which he brooded over revenge, had made the man a demon. Sweet humanity, with all her gentle train seemed banished from his lineaments. He wore a shaggy green box coat, and a red woolen sash was wound about his neck without a collar. Upon the table by him was a short club, a pistol, and an old glazed leather cap, a pair of soiled thick deer-skin gloves lay by the cap and upon one of them were stains of blood.

Herman silently saw all this, and then glanced his eye around the narrow apartment occupied by his father. It contained a rude double cot-bed, three chairs, a chest and table all of the meanest description. There were two square windows in the room, one looking toward the street, the other into the court-yard. Each window contained but eight small panes of glass, and was heavily barred with oaken beams let into sockets. There were two heavy bars also for the door, one of which only was now in its place, the other standing by its side.

"Did you know this man, Ruyter?"

"No. I saw him coming out of the Astor House, and as he looked like a gentleman and a foreigner, I thought I would make a lift by following him!"

"Here is a name on the silver clasp," said Wild, taking the purse. "It is DELORME! He is an Englishman for this is an English name and a good family too!"

"Then he ought to have had more money about him," said the footpad growling. "I will do better next time!"

"Your way of raising a revenue upon the sovereign people isn't so safe as mine," said Wild laughing. "You had best give up the highways and take to picking locks."

"That is beneath me!" answered Ruyter. "If I have been in State's prison, I am at least a gentleman in blood."

"Every man to his taste. Now here is Corney, a man I dare say, of as good blood as you are Ruyter, who has not disdained to play the clasher on one occasion."

Here Ruyter directed his gaze inquisitively toward Herman, whose sensations at such a moment it would be difficult to describe, as he had seen his father only to despise him; and as he sat before him, he internally resolved that he would never acknowledge him, or be made known to him. As his father kept his gaze upon him, Herman dropped his eyes and tried to assume an indifference that he was very far from feeling. He trembled each instant lest by some means he should be recognized by him. But his father, after regarding him steadily for a few moments, looked away with this remark:

"Your friend is young, Wild, and may do better by-and-by than pick locks. If he will come under my teaching I will make a gentleman of him in my way."

"I dare say he is very much obliged to you."

"By-the-by, have you found your wife yet?"

"No," answered Ruyter, with a deep oath.

"I am persuaded she is in the city for I have found out that much. But where she conceals herself I can't yet find out."

"What do you want to see her for? You know she is nothing to you now—State's prison divorces."

"I know that—but I mean to see the woman. I know well that I can intimidate her to give me a home and money if I am short-run."

"What money has she?" carelessly wishing to get all he could out of his friend.

"None of her own, I reckon, for the person who saw her said she was poor looking—but she has the control of my boy's twenty thousand, and it is to get the possession of this I would see her. This one idea has been uppermost in my mind ever since I first entered Sing Sing!"

"Ah, yes—you had a son; I now remember!"

"Yes—a fine little fellow when I saw him last—a boy of some six or seven years, and he is living now if he has not been shipwrecked—for I have heard he has grown up a fine-looking man—and gone to sea. This money was given him by his mother after she sold her old rookery and the land, and it is in trust now with somebody, but who I can't find out. Now if I can fall in with her I can get all out of her before he returns from sea; and once in my possession, he may whistle for it. If he or she are troublesome, I have a settler here," and he laid his hand significantly upon his knife.

Wild looked aside at Herman's face, which he saw was deadly pale, while his eye was fearfully black, save a bright intense star of indignant light blazing in the depth of its center. He was about to make some remark to Ruyter, but the expression of Herman's face checked his words. He saw that he was about to speak, and he resolved to wait the result.

"Sir," said Herman, with fearful calmness, and bending his eyes upon him, while he smiled with an appalling aspect, "what would you give to him who told you where you could find Madam De Ruyter?"

"What would I give?" cried he, eagerly, and leaning earnestly forward upon the table; "I would give him one hundred dollars, so that he did it!"

"What security have I, if I give you this information, that you will pay me?"

"My word—do you doubt it?"

"No—I will take your word. Come with me, and I will take you to her abode."

"You will—do you know it?"

"Yes, I have been there this very night and seen her."

"You are my man!" cried Ruyter, rising up, and placing his cap on his head.

"The only condition I require is that you go with me unarmed. Leave your weapons here."

"A trap!"

"Do you fear—I am not bound to show you?" answered Herman, with a smile of contempt.

"Then I will go without my weapons. I can trust him, can I?" he asked, in an undertone of Wild.

"Yes, by all means—he is a trump!" answered Wild—then, puzzled at Herman's course, he, in his turn, asked the latter in an undertone, "What the deuce he intended to do with the hoary old villain?"

"Leave him to me," answered Herman, "and keep my secret."

"I will."

"Are you ready?" said Herman, in a commanding tone, as he rose and approached the door, the bar across which he took down with his own hand.

"Yes quite. But—"

"But what—why do you hesitate?"

"I'm blamed if I like your looks, and suspect a trap. If Wild was not here I should believe you were an officer?"

"Then I will go without you. Come Wilkins, we will depart."

"Nay, then, here goes with you, Mr. Corney," answered his father, who by no means relished the singular tone and air of the young stranger; and, under other circumstances his aroused suspicions would have deterred him from committing himself to his guidance; but his strong desire to see his former wife, for whom he had been diligently on the look-out since he had been out of prison, led him to overcome his suspicious fears of a plan to arrest him, and to accompany the young man on the expedition before him. He therefore followed him to the street, and here Herman, after saying a few words to Wild, who left and entered the tap of the Saracen's Head, took the direction toward his mother's abode, his father walking by his side, with the silent watchful air and manner of a man about to be betrayed.

"Herman has taken a strange way of acting," said Wild, as he entered the tap, after looking down the street until they disappeared. "He says it's all right, and bids me wait for him in the little room where the good dame Dirk is to have his supper ready—well, Herman is a devil of a fellow. The old man has got into a scrape now, I will wager. It was capital that he should have divulged his whole plan right before Herman. If he knew how I cheated him, pass his son off for Corney, he'd put a knife into me. I only pray Herman may keep him safe, whatever he is going to do with the old rogue."

CHAPTER XVII.

FACE TO FACE.

WHEN Herman reached the door leading up the narrow and dark stairway toward his mother's room, he turned and addressed his father in these terms:—

"The woman you seek lives here. I will go up first and prepare her for such an unlooked-for visitor. You say you were once her husband, and the sudden sight of you might affect her. Remain you here while I go up. But come into the entry and let me close the door."

Ruyter obeyed, though not without hesitation, and when he saw the door shut upon him he felt a little trepidation; and after he saw Herman turn the key and place it in his pocket, he became satisfied that he had been trapped. He was about to spring upon the young man and seize him by the throat, charging him with treachery, but Herman had already ascended the stairs, opened the door at the top of the flight, and entered the room.

"This place looks confoundedly suspicious, and I don't by any means like this young fellow's looks. He eyes me with an evil eye, and means me no good! But perhaps he is right in saying the woman lives here, and means honestly. I will wait and see what comes of it. I don't like his locking me in here in this fashion. Let me see if one of these panels is not loose. I would get out if I could. Yes, the door is old and one gives way. The fresh air enters! I'm out of my trap." He was about to yield to his fear and escape when he heard the sound of a female voice above stairs, which at once arrested him.

"Yes, that is madam. The young fellow is right. I would know that voice in Patagonia!" he exclaimed with satisfaction, and hurriedly replacing the panel, he eagerly half ascended the stairway. All was the next moment still. He listened with the most intense anxiety.

"Mother," said Herman, on entering suddenly, as he did just as she was about retiring for the night, "mother, I have news of a painful

nature to communicate. My father is pardoned out of prison!

"I know it, Herman, and have trembled lest he should seek me!" answered his mother, with alarm visible on her countenance, and taking him by the hand with fear. Cecilia was not visible, but a slight motion of the curtain that concealed the bed, and a look which Mrs. De Ruyter cast that way showed him that she had already retired, fatigued with the duties and events of the day.

"He does seek you! Nay—hear me with firmness. I have met him, but he knew me not, knows me not! I was introduced to him under the name of Corney. Such you must call me before him, for you will see him in a few moments!"

"See him! Oh, Herman, Herman, have you brought your father hither?" she cried, clasping her hands.

"Yes, mother! I did it from a laid plan I heard him say to a friend and to myself, supposing, me to be Corney, that he sought you to get my property from you (knowing me as he said, to be at sea) and to get a home and asylum with you by intimidating you. He said he would give a hundred dollars to any one to show him where you were. A scheme entered my mind suddenly, and I said that I would show him, for I knew where you lived. He is now below in the entry! When you see him, meet him carelessly, and firmly, for I shall be present. Be guided by me in the progress of the interview; for this night I mean to relieve you from all future fears from him. I have thought it best, if he has resolved to see you, he had best see you once for all in my presence. Now be calm, and I will bring him in! be firm, dear mother, for I am with you, and remember!"

Mrs. De Ruyter stood pale and confounded, with her hands clasped upon her bosom, and her eyes lifted to heaven in prayer for strength. Herman tenderly embraced her, repeated his injunctions to be firm, and then went toward the door.

"Come up, sir, the lady will see you," said Herman, opening the door and calling below.

When Ruyter entered and beheld his wife standing, calm and self possessed, though very pale, in the center of the room, he remained a moment gazing upon her, without emotion. Her matronly air and lady-like dignity abashed him, and made him feel the inferiority to which crime had degraded him. Herman advanced a few steps, and stood not far from his mother, giving her a look of encouragement. But how could the poor lady gather encouragement from such a source, against such a danger. How could she gather strength from the assurance that the son would protect the mother against the father! Her heart sunk within her; though she strove to sustain herself, feeling that she had need! At length the returned convict spoke.

"So," he said, with a half smile, that on his features was a leer of the grossest hardihood of character, "so, wife, we have met again."

"I am no longer your wife, sir," she answered, firmly.

"That is as we may agree, madam," he answered with irony, advancing a step nearer to her. "I say, young fellow," he added, turning to Herman, "here is the purse I took, you know when. Take it in part pay and go. To-morrow I will pay you the balance of what I agreed to!" As he spoke, he tossed the purse to Herman. "Take it and go back to the Saracen! I have some little private affairs with this lady to talk over!"

"I keep the purse, but shall not leave until I receive the balance," answered Herman, placing the purse in his pocket.

"There are thirty dollars in it," answered the convict with a savage glance.

"There should be seventy more. Till I receive it I shall not leave you," answered Herman, with positiveness. "Say what you say before me if you cannot pay me what you owe!"

"Then go to the devil for the balance," answered Ruyter, with a brutal oath. "Listen if you will, I care not."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE INTERVIEW.

WHEN the convict had thus spoken, he turned to Mrs. De Ruyter, who, pale and trembling, had listened to their words, and said:

"Madam, I should judge you were not very glad to see me, by your looks, but I am determined to make my home here! What has become of Herman's money?"

"It is all lost!" she answered, faintly.

"Lost? I do not believe a word of it. How lost?"

"The banker who had it in trust failed."

"'Tis false! who was he?" he cried, advancing, and was about to lay his hand upon her, but Herman's arm intervened and knocked his upward, while he said to him in a very positive tone:

"Speak to the lady, and lay not a finger upon her!"

"Ah, younker, you are home here, it seems! what is the woman to you? she is my wife, and I'll thank you to keep yourself at a distance!"

"Who I am, you shall know in good time. I shall see the lady is not rudely treated. What you have to say, say to her, for the hour is late."

His father fixed on him a glance of rage and hatred, but seeing the tall well-limbed young man stand composed and resolute, he feared the encounter with him he meditated; and then he remembered he was without his weapons.

"Well, I'll find time and a way to be quits with you, young fellow," he said, sullenly. "Now, wife, let us hear about the money you put in the bank for your son!"

"I have told you it was all gone! The banker has failed and both Herman and I are impoverished. You see my abode. This should convince you."

The convict glanced his eyes around the wretched abode, and then said:

"Very well, it may be so, but I doubt it. Who was this banker?"

"Mr. Waldeigh?"

"Oh, ay! I remember his name. I can find out the truth of this matter for myself then to-morrow. Where is Herman?"

"He—he went to sea two years ago," answered his mother, catching Herman's cautioning glance.

"Yes, so I heard! When do you look for him home?"

"He wrote me he should be here about this time!"

"Well, I'm glad he will find his money all gone," said Ruyter, with an oath; "he is a confounded high-spirited fellow, I'm told, and don't fear the devil! I hope he'll come soon, for when he finds he's poor, he'll take easily to training for the profession I follow; and I'd like to have the teaching of the boy. If he's so smart as I hear he is, he'll cut me all out. Now, old woman, what have you got for supper?"

"Nothing!"

"Nothing—I must have something. I haven't eaten since my dinner, and that was a slim affair. You may as well stir, for I mean to sup and lodge here to-night."

As he spoke, he was about to sit down in a chair, when Herman, removing it from behind him, cast it to the further side of the room, saying at the same time:

"Now, sir, if you have said all you wish to this noble and virtuous lady whom you have so long disgraced by your crimes, it is time you should take your leave, for be assured that here, this night, you neither sup nor lodge!"

"Who the devil are you?" asked De Ruyter, after gazing with surprise upon him as he stood eyeing him with calm and resolute eyes.

"I am the bearer of the name you have disgraced and degraded. I am the inheritor of your infamy. My name is Herman De Ruyter, like thine own."

"What?" exclaimed the astonished father, starting back and fixing his confounded stare upon the features of his son. "Are you Herman? Are you my son?" and he trembled with fear, as he put the interrogation to the indignant and stern young man.

"To my disgrace I am thy son, man of crime! In me behold the child for whom it was your duty to have lived an honorable and virtuous life. But instead you turned your hand to guilt, and brought woe upon your wife, my mother, and entailed dishonor upon me! For this I might forgive you, but for your wrongs to her I love and honor, I curse you! Vile wretch, not satisfied with the deep wrongs you have done her, you would now come crawling, like the slimy serpent from his filthy den of crime, and, coiling yourself upon her threshold, poison all the air around you! No! I am here to be her protector, and if need be, her avenger! To me you are only a convict of the State's prison. As a father I never knew you or your love—I have only known my mother. Therefore, beware of my vengeance, for no filial emotion lies between it and thee. That thou mightest hear me speak and that I might know all thy purposes toward my mother, I brought thee here myself lest you should creep hither unawares and do mischief. I thought it best you should see her in my presence. You have seen her, and in the interview betrayed to us both the deep depravity of your base heart. Now, sir, the interview is ended. From this moment be a stranger to this lady. See her house again, dare to lift a recognizing look in the street, dare to approach her in any way, and I swear to you by the God that made me, that hour shall be your last!"

"Herman—Herman!" cried Mrs. De Ruyter, in the deepest anguish.

"Not one word to me, dear mother, now. Come, sir, take up your cap and leave this place, and never cross its threshold again! I shall watch your movements from this time with a jealous eye. Leave the house, wretched and guilty man! Seek your den, and never crawl from it again to meet the eyes of the wife and son you have so deeply wronged!"

Thus speaking, Herman opened the door. Abashed, humbled, and subdued by fear, the guilty wretch turned and silently left the chamber and descended the stairs. He spake not a word nor even looked again upon the face of her who had once been his wife; but with his cap

over his eyes, and a shuffling crouching air, he went out of the room. What was in his heart will be better known in the progress of the tale. Herman locked the door after him, and then rejoined his mother, whom he found fainting upon the floor, with Cecilia in her night dress bending over her.

In a few minutes their united efforts restored her, and after a while Herman took his leave, promising to breakfast with them in the morning. On his way up the street, he reflected upon the course he had pursued with reference to his father, and felt satisfied he had taken the only one which would effectually protect his mother from his persecutions. This subject was succeeded in his thoughts by the lovely image of Cecilia—but there was something in her look and manner that troubled him. They were kind, frank, and sisterly, yet there was something wanting in her glance to answer to his own deep loving one. She met his eye too freely, too unreservedly, too openly. It was not the timid faltering glance he looked for and which he felt she would manifest if she thought of him with a tenderer love than a sister's.

Herman was troubled as he thought, and vague surmises began to fill his bosom, that possibly Cecilia never thought of him with the same feelings with which he regarded her. "Still," said he, impetuously within himself, "still, if she loves me not, who else does she love? Certainly, knowing I am not her brother, she would never drive my image from her breast to replace it by another. Yet I confess I tremble lest it should be so."

At this stage of his reflections he reached the door of the Saracen's Head and entered it. The tap was nearly deserted, but two or three persons, who were strangers, drinking together at a table near the fire-place. Dirk Dilley was seated in her bar reading a newspaper. Her toilet was improved by a coquettish cap worn upon the back of her head, and by fresh curls on either cheek. She looked up on seeing Herman enter as if expecting him, and smiled.

"Ah!" she said with a smile, "so, truant, you come back! I was getting jealous of that pretty girl till I knew who she was. I heard all about your affair from Wilk. So you've found your mother and sister. Well, I am glad of it, for you can let me have some of your company now. I was afraid they would keep you; but Wilk told me you'd soon be in. Your supper is all ready in the little back parlor. Let us go in to the table, for it is going on to twelve o'clock. It isn't everybody I'd keep up so late for, Herman."

"You are very good, Mrs. Wild—that is, Mrs. Dilley."

"Call me Isabel, as you did at first. Here is the door through the bar. Betty, stay in the bar till those men have done drinking what they have, and then shut up."

Thus giving her orders, the handsome young hostess of Saracen's Head preceded her guest into her tea-room in the rear of the bar.

"Where is Wilkins?" asked Herman, looking around.

"He is coming; for, as he begged hard I invited him to supper with us. Wilkins is a good fellow, keep him under proper government. It's the way I began with him first, when he came out of Sing Sing. If I hadn't been firm as I was, he would have come into my house and taken the helm."

"As my father would have done. I have seen him, but we met and parted as enemies."

"Well, you have a great deal to forgive, Herman, if you forgive him at all," said Dame Dilley, placing the hot-water pot upon the waiter. "Hail here is Wilk, all in good time," she said, as she heard the tap door open. "I knew his step. But it sounds as if he was in bad humor."

The next moment the door into the tea room from the bar opened and the Burglar Captain entered. He smiled slightly, and expressed in a brief word or two, his gratification at finding Herman there; and throwing aside his hat and coat, he took a seat by the table at which Herman had just placed himself. Wild's countenance worked dark and gloomy, and he seemed to find it difficult to enter into the conversation as the supper progressed.

"What the deuce is the matter, Wilkins?" asked Dame Dilley, after looking at him steadily.

"Well, the truth is I have met your father, Herman, and he assures me that your property is all gone by the board."

"So it is. Waldeigh has become bankrupt."

"You take it very coolly."

"It would seem more coolly than you yourself, Wild."

"I—that is, I feel confoundedly sorry for you," answered Wild, embarrassed; for the news he had heard from Ruyter had dashed his hopes to the ground of sharing the twenty thousand dollars with Dirk Dilley. Her countenance immediately fell; but she had full command over its expression.

"Is it true, Herman?" she asked.

"So my mother tells me. I am sorry rather on her account than my own. But I have a few hundreds left."

"Have you seen this Waldeigh?"

"No. But he is in the city."

"I don't believe all is lost, Herman. I know a way by which he can be compelled to disgorge; for this same Waldeigh lives now in good style in the upper part of Broadway!"

"In what way?"

"I cannot now explain. But if you will promise to give me one quarter I get out of him, I will undertake it."

"I will do it," answered Herman.

"The matter is then settled," answered Wild, with a cheerful tone.

By and by Herman left the table and was shown to his room by Dame Dilley who bade him good-night, but less frankly than she would have done had he been worth the twenty thousand dollars she was fishing for. She closed the door and then returned quickly, and with an anxious look to the tea room, where she had left Wild. On entering it she closed the door carefully, and sitting down, fixed her eyes upon his face.

"Well, this game is up," she said gloomily.

"No, Isabel," answered the Burglar Captain.

"I want to hear your plans."

"And share in the spoils?"

"I do."

"Mr. Waldeigh, who was the trustee of this money, failed, it is true. But he now lives in good style, and must have money. I have no doubt that every dollar of Herman's money is safe in his hands!"

"How will you get it if it is?"

"By my genius, Bel. I shall go the first thing to-morrow and sound the premises. I will have Waldeigh in my power in less than twenty-four hours. You know I have four good men I can trust. I shall want the 'black hole.'"

"Ah, I see your plan. You are like yourself again, Wild! The spirit of old times has come over you. Now I will tell you what I will do. If this Waldeigh has the money, and you can get it out of him, I will promise, if you pay down half of it to me, to marry you."

"If I had half of it, I should choose a wife where I liked best, Bel. But don't look dark—let us be friends. I can't let you have half, as I claim only a quarter of what I may get. Herman must have the balance."

The widow reflected a few moments, and then said, as if yielding:

"Well, Wild, as you say. Go to work, and when you have got the money we can talk about the division. Now to your room, for it's after midnight. To-morrow night let me know what you have done."

The Burglar Captain then took his leave after taking a glass of brandy, which she offered him. She let him out by the door into the court, for his room was on the same gallery with that occupied by Napes and Ruyter. Seeing a light glimmering beneath the door of their apartment, he knocked, and giving his name to Ruyter, was admitted, and the door closed upon him. In about twenty minutes he came forth again, having detailed to both his plan with reference to Mr. Waldeigh, and secured their aid; Ruyter he was sure of from the first, for he had learned the result of the meeting between Ruyter and Herman, from the lips of the former, when he saw him outside of the Saracen's Head on his return from Madame De Ruyter's, though the convict did not give the account until he had first cursed him for having introduced his son to him under the name of Corney.

As Wild was taking his departure from their chamber, after his secret interview with the two, Ruyter said softly, so that Napes did not hear him:

"Does Herman lodge here to-night?"

"Yes."

"Is he in bed?"

"Yes."

"In what room?"

"Ah, do you mean him harm?" asked Wild, quickly.

"No, by my soul. He is my boy. Only I wished to know."

"He is in the first room on the lower floor."

"Thank you! I don't mean him harm! good-night!"

Ruyter closed the door and waited till all was still, and then taking his knife and pistol up from the table, he wrapped his overcoat around his shoulders and was going out, when Napes, who had thrown himself upon the bed, asked him where he was going so late?

"A little private expedition of my own!" he answered with a scowl.

"Well, don't disturb me when you come in," said Napes, turning over sulkily with his face against the wall.

The gray-bearded convict closed the door noiselessly behind him, and descending the stairs to the court-yard, stood a moment to listen. Finding all still, he crossed it to the room which Herman occupied. He came to the door, and looking through the key-hole saw that all was dark.

"He is safe there for to-night at least. Now for my revenge on her!"

He turned quickly away, and with a rapid step proceeded to a sort of court gate which opened into a narrow alley. This being locked on the inner side, he easily opened, and passing forth into the alley, he was soon in the street in front of the tavern. He now took his way with

a stealthy air toward the abode of Madame De Ruyter. As he came to it, he paused beneath the window and listened. All was still. He placed his hand upon the door and found it fast.

"I know as good a way," he said stooping down and slipping aside the panel which he had loosened two hours before on being left in the entry by Herman. Looking carefully round to see that he was not watched, he pushed his body through the opening and disappeared within.

CHAPTER XIX.

CUPID'S WORK.

LEAVING the convict Ruyter to proceed on his secret midnight expedition, we will now refer to an event of our story which has only yet been hinted at in connection with the little affair of the "Forget-me-not" worn by Cecilia in her bosom. The history of that little flower is the history of a pure and deep love.

We have said that Cecilia's extreme beauty and her propriety in the exposed situation she had taken in the cigar mart, attracted many admirers. Some of these were young men of respectability, who, while they admired her beauty, greatly respected her virtue and modesty. Yet she manifested to one and all the same graceful reserve, in no instance overstepping the limits of the most perfect propriety.

But the maiden's heart was not made of ice. The bulwark of reserve and insensibility which she had from the first thrown around her, was not strong enough to keep out the little god, Love, who laughs at bars and barriers.

There happened two gentlemen, an elderly man and a younger one, to pass along Broadway one evening, as she was standing in her place behind the counter. Cecilia never looked lovelier than she did that evening. The light of the gas-burner fell brilliantly upon her face, and softened, while it enriched its charms. The young man caught sight of the beautiful girl, and, arresting the progress of the elderly gentleman, turned with him into the shop. With eyes fixed upon her in the deepest admiration, the young man, who, with his companion were evidently high-bred English people, asked her for cigars. While with a gracious smile, and a grace that was inimitable, she presented him the small rosewood boxes containing the most fragrant ones, he could not keep his eyes from her. At length their deep passionate gaze was felt by her, and with a blush of confusion she dropped her eyes to the ground, and while he remained did not once direct them toward him.

"My lord, did you notice the extreme beauty of that lovely cigar-girl?" asked the young man, with admiration in his tones, as they left the mart and resumed their walk.

"Yes. She is remarkably lovely; and somehow her face has awakened in me a strange interest."

"Ah, my lord!" cried the young man, coloring; "do you confess this much? I myself was about confessing that I had felt something of the same myself. We must be rivals."

"Your interest is widely different from mine, my young friend; I felt a sad and gentle interest awakened in my bosom as I gazed on her. I thought, too, how many temptations so young a girl must be exposed to, and—"

"No doubt you felt very philosophical and parental, my lord," answered the young man, laughing.

The interest which he felt in the lovely cigar-vender was not wholly on one side. She had met and felt the passionate yet respectful ardor of his glance, and it awakened in her bosom emotions pleasing yet agitating. After his departure she did not forget him with the next customer, but the image of his fine face, for he was very handsome, and tall and noble in height and air, lingered in her thoughts and was carried home to her humble pillow, where it mingled with her dreams.

The first thought she had the next morning, on awaking was, if she would see the noble young stranger again that day! and a hundred times her heart bounded as she lifted her eyes at an entering footstep which she thought sounded like his. Just at twilight she saw him slowly pass the door and look in. Her heart trembled with emotions of hope, fear and joy. The next moment she heard a step, and looking up saw the object of her thoughts entering the shop. She trembled like a leaf. She was afraid to look up, and stood covered with blushes which she tried to conceal, for she feared he would discover the interest he had awakened in her heart. She was alone in the shop. In the same breath she wished, and did not wish, the proprietor were present.

With ease and self-possession he approached the glass case behind which she stood, and in a tone that betrayed a feeling stronger than mere gallantry, asked her for cigars. While she was waiting upon him, he continued to regard her intently, and with increasing admiration. In a quiet conversational tone, and in a manner calculated to win her confidence, (for he saw how embarrassed and confused she was) he began to speak with her. By degrees, and in the most delicate way, he succeeded in learning from her something of her history, that is so far as the

poverty of her mother, as she called Mrs. De Ruyter, rendered it necessary for her to take such a place to aid in her support. He was charmed with the frank ingenuousness of her replies, and she with the kind interest he seemed to take in her.

"I assure you, miss," he said to her, "that the interest I have shown in these inquiries is sincere, and not mere curiosity. I have had you in my thoughts, ever since I saw you yesterday. I resolved to visit you again and converse with you. You are very good to suffer me to talk with you. Do you live far from this?"

"But ten minutes walk, sir," she answered, dropping her eyes.

"And do you walk alone?"

"Not always, sir!"

"Will you permit me to wait upon you this evening when you close your shop?"

"Sir, you are very kind! but you will see the impropriety of my admitting it. I have only my fair name, which the least breath of slander will defame. The proprietor, usually accompanies me; and sometimes I run all the way alone!"

"I will not urge you," he said, pleasantly; "but I regret that you are compelled by circumstances to be placed in such a situation. Will you permit me, as a friend, to take steps to render your mother's condition better, so that you can remain altogether with her?"

"Indeed, sir, you are a stranger, though a kind one. I feel grateful for your proposal, but I must decline it."

At this moment some persons came in, and the young Englishman took his leave. An hour afterward, as it was a moonlight night, Cecilia left the shop at eight o'clock to proceed homeward. She went tripping along with a rapid step and with a happy heart, for she was thinking of the young stranger when suddenly she found a gentleman walking by her side, and his hand laid tightly upon her arm.

"Do not be alarmed."

She knew the tone of the voice, and restrained the impulse to fly; yet she trembled, though not with fear. "I have watched you, that I may see you safely homeward," said the foreigner, in the gentlest cadence of his voice.

"I thank you, sir, I am very grateful to you, but I had rather go alone!"

"Then suffer me to walk a little way behind you," he said, respectfully, and dropping back a step. She felt his consideration for her feelings, and instinctively yielding to the generous impulses which this conduct aroused in her bosom, she gradually walked slower, until he was again by her side. She felt a sweet sense of protection as he walked along by her, and her heart was filled with joy as he discoursed to her in the tender accents of a pure devotion. He accompanied her to the door, and there took leave of her, pressing the hand she diffidently yielded to his friendly parting clasp.

"You will permit me this pleasure to-morrow night?" he said, as he was leaving her.

She would have said "yes," if her feelings had governed; but, influenced by propriety, she answered firmly, "No."

"Then I must trust to chance," he said, smiling.

When she reached the room, and was alone with her own thoughts, and began to examine the nature of her feelings toward the handsome and respectful young stranger, she confessed, with a sigh of sadness, that he was very dear to her—far dearer than ever she had felt Herman to be.

"Yet he is a stranger. Why should I think of him? I may well sigh with sadness to think I have let my affections fix upon one who is evidently so far above me, and whose further acquaintance it would be wrong to encourage. I only know his name to be Edward, and that he is a native of England, but a few weeks in this city: I will try to think no more of him." Yet the more she resolved to banish him from her thoughts the more he filled them.

The next evening the young stranger called at the shop for cigars; and although she tried to be reserved, his kindness and gentleness of manner rendered her resolutions of no avail. Taking advantage of a favorable moment, he took from his breast a bouquet, composed of a sprig of myrtle and a forget-me-not, and placed it in her hand. As he did so, he smiled, bowed, and took his leave. An hour afterward, when he overtook her going homeward and walking by her side, her arm placed with confidence in his, he was gratified to see that his light gift was in her bosom.

After accompanying her to the door, he proceeded toward the Astor House, and entering, ascended to a suit of rooms, where he found the gentleman Cecilia had first seen him with. This person was in full ball dress, and was walking up and down the parlor as if waiting for him. He was a noble-looking man, with a decidedly military air, and commanding person. His age was probably fifty-five or six.

Upon a sofa, reading, sat a lady about five and forty, and retaining, in her fine features, traces of great beauty. There was in her face sufficient likeness to the young man to mark the near relationship of mother and son.

"Ah, Edward, you have kept brother long waiting for you," she said, with a smile, mingled with her mild reproof.

"Some more romancing, I'll warrant," answered the gentleman, smiling. "I shall have to leave New York to save you from falling in love with a pretty shop-tender."

"I confess to the charge, uncle, of having been detained by her. The truth is, my lord, I fear I shall have to run away from her, for I was never so taken."

"You are imprudent, Edward," said the Lady Lessington. "You will do this young girl, if she is modest, a great injury, and degrade yourself. I fear from the animated manner in which you yesterday gave me an account of your conversations with her and your boldness in escorting her homeward, that you have, in truth, suffered your feelings to get the better of your judgment. This conduct is so unlike you! Did I not know the integrity of your character, I should fear that your regard for her was dictated by the worst motives."

"My dearest mother, I only wish you could see her yourself. I know not what it is in her face that so deeply interests me. I frankly tell you that if she were in a suitable rank of society, I should not hesitate to confess that I was deeply in love with her, and seriously address myself to win her as my wife."

"Such being your feelings, my son, it is due to her, as well as yourself, that you do not see her again."

"I will not promise, my dear mother."

"Then we had best pursue our tour to Niagara and Montreal, brother," she said, turning to the gentleman, who stood by in silence.

"Yes, if Edward has so far forgotten himself and what is due to the honor of his rank and name."

"Nay, my lord and noble uncle, you are severe. I will make the promise to my mother: for I feel that it would be criminal and cruel in me to awaken feelings in that young girl's bosom which could only fall back again upon her own heart to perish. My mother is right. I will see her no more; for as an honorable man I cannot. But this decision will be a great sacrifice to me; for you know not how deeply my heart is interested in her, mother."

"Come, nephew, shall we go to this party? The carriage has been some time in waiting. I feared by your delay you had been attacked by some foot-pad, as I was early this evening. I gave him my purse to have time to knock him down, but the rogue got to his feet and escaped with it."

"I will complete my toilet in a few moments," answered the young man. "I trust you were not hurt."

"No."

"I regret, mother, that your slight indisposition prevents you from going to this party," added Lord Edward; and he then left the room.

After an absence of a few moments, he returned and announced himself as ready to accompany his uncle.

This party in the drawing-room consisted of General Lord Delorme, his widowed sister, the Lady Ann Lessington, and her son, Lord Edward Lessington. They had arrived three weeks before in the United States, by the way of Boston, and had been in New York ten days. Their object in visiting America was partly a tour of pleasure, and partly for Lady Lessington to visit her sister, who was the wife of the Governor-General of the Canadas. The ball to which they were invited was given expressly to them by the British consul.

Without describing the magnificence of the room, the elegance of the entertainment, and the splendor of the gay throngs there assembled, we will pass to an event of the evening, more intimately connected with our story.

As General Delorme was walking up and down one of the apartments, conversing with a distinguished New York merchant, who had been presented to him, a gentleman entered, and seeing the former stood for some moments transfixed, closely regarding his face with a look of the deepest surprise.

At length he walked rapidly up to the English consul, and said to him in a tone of singular agitation:

"Sir, will you be so kind as to tell me who that gentleman is, with the high, bold forehead and military air?"

"That, Mr. Carrol, is General Lord Delorme, whom I told you you would meet at my house. Come, let me present you. Yonder is his nephew waltzing with Miss Gerold, the belle. But why are you so agitated?"

"I beg pardon for my confusion, sir. Do you not remember that seven years ago I came to you with an account of the mysterious disappearance of a lovely child, which I told you I had received from a poor, dying woman, on the passage from England?"

"I remember it perfectly, and that it was your impression this child belonged to a good family."

"Yes, sir. At the same time I told you that I had a portrait of a gentleman, copied from a miniature which the child had with her, and also the child's portrait taken, and both

send to England, and placed in a public gallery there, if perchance, the friends of the child might, by this means, be discovered. Since then, sir, and the sudden disappearance of the child from my house, I have heard nothing from her. But now, sir, that gentleman."

"But what connection has he with the subject, sir?" asked the consul, with surprise.

"The moment I saw his face, as I entered, I recognized in it the original of the miniature which the child had round her neck, and which I had copied."

"Is not this a delusion, Mr. Carrol?"

"No, sir. Each moment I see it stronger and stronger, as well in his features as when he smiles, a vivid resemblance to the child!"

"That is very extraordinary."

"It is, sir."

"Yet I should not wish to speak of this subject to General Delorme without stronger proofs."

"I will go for the miniature. My carriage is at the door."

"Do so, Mr. Carrol. The whole story of the child, as you once related it to me when you solicited my aid in your efforts to trace her parentage, now recurs to me. I am deeply interested in the subject. It may be as you say—hasten for the miniature, I beg of you."

In less than twenty minutes Mr. Carrol returned, and placed the portrait in the consul's hands. He had no sooner glanced at it, than he uttered an exclamation of surprise and astonishment.

"You are right, sir. It is his portrait, only some dozen years junior. But to make sure, come with me where his nephew, Lord Edward, is standing."

"My lord, here is a miniature. Have you ever known the original?"

"It is the general's!" he answered, taking and glancing at it.

"Do you mean General Delorme?"

"Certainly, sir. I was not aware you had it. It looks a little younger, but the likeness is perfect!"

"I am satisfied, Mr. Carrol," answered the consul. "Come with me, and I will also send for the Earl of Delorme to my library. We will then investigate this interesting affair. But alas! if it should prove true that child was his, what avails to confirm to him her loss?"

"It may be that she lives, sir," said Mr. Carrol, warmly. "I have never ceased to believe that she is still alive somewhere; and I have not for one day given up the hope of seeing her. I do not encounter in the streets a young girl of the age she would be now that I do not intuitively survey her features closely and ask myself if it may not be my lost protegee."

CHAPTER XX.

THE GENERAL'S STORY.

WHEN the message from the consul came to Lord Delorme, he was at the moment in conversation with Lord Edward, who was in the act of asking him where he had the miniature taken which had been shown him by the consul.

"I know of no miniature, Edward," answered the nobleman. "What have you seen?"

Before Lord Edward replied, the message was delivered by an attendant from the consul, desiring Lord Delorme's presence in the library.

"Come, let us go in together, Lord Edward, and ask the consul about the miniature, you speak of."

Together they entered the library. The consul met them at the door.

"Pardon me, my lord, for taking this liberty, but I have a few words to say to you in private."

"Then I will retire," answered the young man.

"No, my lord, remain if you please. You can hear all I have to say. Be seated, my lord."

Lord Delorme having taken a chair, the consul thus addressed him, while Mr. Carrol sat regarding the features of the nobleman with the most intense interest, comparing them from time with those of the miniature he held in his hand.

"My lord, I have taken the liberty of sending for you to ask if you had ever a miniature of yourself taken?" said the consul.

"This singular question would surprise me, I must confess, sir," answered Lord Delorme, "but that I was just spoken to about a miniature of myself by my nephew. What is this picture you both speak of?"

"Will you be so kind first, my lord, to recollect if ever you had a miniature taken?"

"Yes, several."

"In lockets?"

"No, but one."

"Is that it, my lord?" cried Mr. Carrol, extending that he held in his hand toward him.

"This, my lord, is Mr. Carrol, an eminent merchant of this city," said the consul. "He will explain to you how he came by the picture."

Lord Delorme took the picture in his hand, and had no sooner glanced at the face than an expression of recognition, mingled with the

most intense surprise, came upon his countenance. He stared for fully one minute, fixedly regarding the portrait, while his face assumed the color of marble.

"Pray, sir," he said in a voice tremulous with emotion, and looking toward Mr. Carrol, "can you tell me where you obtained this?" and his hand shook like an aspen leaf. "The last time I saw this miniature I placed it around my child's neck, since which fatal hour I have never beheld either—but quickly tell me sir! He who can explain how he came by this, must know something of my lost child!"

His words were full of the pathos of deep grief. The consul and Mr. Carrol exchanged glances of gratified intelligence, both being satisfied now, at last, the parentage of the lovely child was discovered.

"Will your lordship be so good as to state in what manner and under what circumstances you last beheld this miniature?" asked Mr. Carrol.

"I was returning from London in my carriage, with my little daughter and her nurse, having taken her to town in the morning to indulge her with a holiday. We left London about an hour before sunset, I intending to reach home in time to dine at seven, as my villa was but sixteen miles from town. The nurse and child sat on the front seat, and I up on the back; and as I had had this very miniature finished that day, and was taking it home to Lady Delorme, to please the child I took it from its case, and threw it around her neck to amuse her while I took a nap, as was my custom in riding to and from town. The next thing I recollect was being awakened by a cold draught in the carriage, when I saw that one of the doors was open, and that I was alone. It was just dark. Filled with alarm and surprise, I pulled the string of the carriage to stop it, and sprung to the ground. Where is the nurse and my child? I demanded of the coachman, in accents of horror. No one knew. The postman had seen nothing—heard nothing. Yet by some means they were both gone, and the door of the coach I had found open. But without entering into the details of my grief and consternation, and giving you an account of my fruitless search and inquiries, I will briefly add, that ten days afterward the nurse made her appearance at the villa, where all was mourning, in a state bordering on insanity. She confessed that while I slept, she also fell asleep, leaving the child standing against the glass window of the coach, looking out!—that when she awoke she missed the child, found the door open and her charge gone. She said that the fastening must have slipped, and that it had fallen out of the carriage into the road. Instantly overwhelmed with a sense of her responsibility, she sprung from the carriage without giving the alarm, hoping to find it unhurt, and with the resolve if it was killed, to take her own life. She represented that after searching up and down the moors all night (for it was while crossing them she missed the child) she sunk exhausted by the wayside. She was taken up by some humane persons and carried into an inn, where she was ill several days with a brain fever; and as soon as she could move she desired them to take her to me, that she might know if the child was found, and if not to confess her own guilt."

"From that time I have not been able to trace any clew of my daughter. I advertised her in all the papers, offering large rewards even for the least information respecting her, either alive or dead; or even the knowledge of her death would have been a relief far preferable to the dreadful state of uncertainty under which we labored. At length after a year had elapsed, we gave her up as dead, though not without a lingering hope, she might yet live and be restored to us. And now when I inform you, gentlemen, that this miniature is the very one which I placed around her neck the last time I looked upon her, you will not be surprised at the emotion which you have seen me manifest, on beholding it under circumstances so extraordinary. Sir, if you regard a father's feelings, make haste to give me such information as you possess in relation to this picture."

"My Lord," answered Mr. Carrol with deep sympathy in his tones, "Seven years ago the past season, I came passenger from England to this port, in a ship which also carried as a steerage passenger a poor but respectable-looking woman, who had with her a young girl of nine or ten years of age. This woman died on the passage, and committed the child to my charge. She said that it was not her own; but that she had found it one evening wandering on the moors near London, when it was about five years old."

"My child! This was the age of my lovely Cecilia when I lost her," exclaimed Lord Delorme, deeply interested in this relation.

"The woman said she took the child home, and her heart yearned toward it, because she had a few days before buried her own little girl about the same age. She said the child was richly dressed, and had not only the miniature you now hold about its neck, but also a small cross. She gave me the miniature in her dying hands, saying she had repented keeping the

child, and hoped that it would be the means of returning her to her friends. She said she had not heard any inquiries after it, which is probable from her obscure situation; and as she removed to another neighborhood and pawned it off for her own little girl, suspicion never fastened upon her.

"That child, gentlemen, must be my daughter," answered Lord Delorme, with the most profound emotion.

"There can be no question of it," exclaimed Lord Edward, "How extraordinary."

"I fear, from the sad expression upon your face, Mr. Carrol," said Lord Delorme, "that the child entrusted to you, no longer lives, and that I have found my own daughter only to weep over her grave."

"I wish, my lord, I could relieve your anxiety, as well as my own, touching the fate of this sweet child."

"Then my forebodings are true?"

"You shall hear, my lord! I accepted the trust the dying woman confided to me, and took the lovely child to my own house and adopted her as my daughter."

"Thanks, thanks, kind sir."

"I, at the same time, had a portrait taken from this miniature and sent to a gallery in London, in hopes some one knowing the original might see it, and so lead to the discovery of her parentage; for, much as the lovely little girl became endeared to us I felt it my duty to leave no means untried to discover her family."

"Sir, you have a father's warmest gratitude," said Lord Delorme.

"I have also, my lord, the approval of my own heart. We soon learned to love the child as our own, and each day she wound herself more and more closely around our hearts. I also had a portrait of the child taken, with the intention of sending it to London, when—

"A portrait of my child," exclaimed Lord Delorme, with intense excitement. "Where is it? Let me behold it! The sight of it would at once assure me of the identity of this protege of yours with my daughter, if they are one and the same, of which I have no doubt! Where have you this portrait, Mr. Carrol?"

"It will be here in a moment, my lord," answered Mr. Carrol. "After getting back here with the miniature, I recollected the portrait and dispatched a servant for it thinking it would serve to strengthen the testimony I foresaw, from your resemblance to the miniature, was about to be brought to bear upon my protege's parentage."

While Mr. Carrol spoke, a knock was heard at the door, on opening it he saw the man with the portrait. He took it from him, and placing it in a strong light over against the lamp, stepped aside for Lord Delorme to look at it. The nobleman and his nephew both eagerly approached to view it, and both at the moment exclaimed:

"It is she!"

"It is my daughter, my long lost child again before me!" continued Lord Delorme, kneeling upon one knee before the picture, and gazing upon it with rapt affection. "Yes, the same delicate brow! the same sweet smile and mouth! the same soft brown hair! it is my Cecilia with more maturity; the maturity that six years would give! In her fifth year she was lost to me, and this was taken, you say, six years afterward, Mr. Carrol."

"She was probably eleven when this was painted, my lord."

"So she would have looked at eleven."

"It looks almost as she looked at five, uncle," said Lord Edward, gazing upon it with surprise and tenderness. "There can now be no manner of doubt as to the identity of the original of this portrait."

"There is even a correct representation of the very cross she wore—her mother's gift," resumed the nobleman, still kneeling before the picture and regarding its features with the deepest attention and an air of grief mingled with tenderness. The young man also began to fix his eyes upon it with suddenly renewed animation, as if he had all at once discovered in it some half-remembered resemblance of some one. The longer he gazed the stronger this impression grew upon him that he had not only seen the original of that picture before him years past, in childhood, but he had seen the same face recently. But where he could not decide. Still he surveyed it, more and more puzzled, for the longer he looked the deeper grew this impression.

"Now, Mr. Carrol, all that remains for you is to inform me of the fate of my child," said Lord Delorme, rising and turning sadly toward him. "I am persuaded she is no more; therefore tell me when she died and where you have laid her."

"There seems destined, my lord, that all connected with this lovely child should be attended with mystery. A few weeks after I had this picture taken, my house was broken into by night, by a notorious burglar, who was, however, arrested. But by some stratagem he escaped, and the next night the house was also entered, but whether the same or not I cannot tell. The alarm was given by a servant, and as I was rushing from my room I heard the wild

cries of Cecilia from the rear of the house. Appalled at the sound, for I supposed she was fast asleep in her little bed, I flew down stairs, her cries ringing in my ears—

"Save me, father! Oh, save me!"

"Would to God, I, her father, had been there to answer to her cries! Go on, sir," said the nobleman, with deep excitement.

"I reached the gate, and leaping into the lane, saw a carriage at the other end just driving off at a furious rate. I suspected that Cecilia had been borne away in it, and, giving the alarm, I started in swift pursuit. But it was out of sight when I got to the head of the lane, and I saw it no more. Three days afterward the body of the burglar Shears, who had broken into my house, was found floating in a dock in the East river, with a deep knife wound in his breast. All search after Cecilia proved fruitless, and at length I gave her up as dead!"

"And from that moment you have not seen nor heard from the hapless girl?" asked Lord Edward.

"No, my lord. It is my belief she horribly perished in some way connected with the burglar's death, for I cannot but believe that he was the person who abducted her; for he escaped the day after he was taken in my house, and doubtless came the next night and carried off the child out of revenge."

"It is doubtless so. But how he should come to a sudden death and no traces of the child is extraordinary," said Lord Edward. "Was there any suspicion how this notorious burglar got his death wound?"

"No, my lord. It was doubtless in some broil among his associates, who threw his body into the river to conceal the act!"

"But my child—my child! What became of my child?" cried the nobleman, in the deepest anguish.

"Was there no child's body found near that time?" asked Lord Edward.

"None. I made every inquiry, but without being able to get hold of the least clew to unravel the mystery that hung around her sudden disappearance from beneath my roof!"

"Mr. Carrol," said Lord Delorme, in a tone at once solemn and desponding, "have you the least hope, that my child lives?"

"I have never, my lord, given up the hope of once more seeing or hearing from her. It is my opinion that she lives, though perhaps dead to us, who are so deeply interested in the knowledge of the fact!"

"Oh that I could believe that I should once more behold her! But no! There is not the least probability. She is no more! Alas! that I should have discovered thus much! that I should have dispelled one painful mystery hanging about her first disappearance, to be plunged into the mazes of another still more distressing! Is there no clew by which we might sift this to the bottom?"

"I would recommend, my lord," replied the Consul, "that an advertisement be inserted in the principal papers of the city, referring to the events narrated by Mr. Carrol, and offering a large reward for any information that may throw light upon her present condition."

"It shall be done. Edward, you will write such an advertisement, and be so good as to have it in the paper to-morrow. My child may yet live, and I may yet embrace her. By this time she would be seventeen. Alas! if living, into what fearful moral degradation may she not have been plunged. Nevertheless, she would be still my child."

The parties so deeply interested in the fate of the lovely wanderer, after some further discussion upon the subject, retired from the library. Lord Delorme called his carriage and sought his rooms at the Astor, where he related all he had heard to his sister, Lady Lessington, who listened with a surprise that cannot be described, but may be imagined.

It was her opinion, after Cecilia's first preservation so wonderfully, that she was destined again to re-appear; and that both would yet behold her. She was all hope and joy, and communicated new energies to the desponding spirits of Lord Delorme.

Edward was not disposed to retire so early from the ball, and lingered till twelve, when he left, and wrapped in his cloak, pursued his way alone, thinking upon the extraordinary revelations he had heard. As he came near the lane which turned down to the abode of the lovely cigar-vender, he was inspired by a desire to pass her window and recall her sweet image, quite forgetting his promise made to his mother. As he came near, he saw a man walking by the door in a suspicious manner, and he paused in the shade, the closer to observe his operations.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ASSASSIN.

THE person whom the young nobleman discovered was Ruyter, the convict. Edward watched him closely, for he well knew the character of the neighborhood in which the beautiful cigar-girl lived, and he had spoken to her about the danger of dwelling in such a quarter of the city, delicately offering to her, at the same time, such means as would enable her to choose a better abode. The offer, how-

ever, the young girl gratefully declined, acting in this instance, as in all other cases, with that charming propriety which characterized her.

"If the house were not so wretched, I should suspect the fellow of burglary. But he must have some other motive than treasure. Nay, what treasure is more valuable than the lovely cigar-vender who dwells there? She must be the object, and I am providentially here!"

While he was making these mental observations, Ruyter had slipped the panel, as we have seen, and to the surprise of Edward, darted through it and disappeared.

He immediately approached the door, and softly sliding the panel back again (for the convict had replaced it), he endeavored to pass through: but being stouter about the shoulders than Ruyter, he was unable to get in as he had done. He, however, by passing his arm through the aperture, succeeded in reaching up to the key on the inside and unlocking the door.

As it opened he entered and listened. A door closed softly above him. He groped his way up the stairs, and entered the room into which Ruyter had already preceded him. As he went in, the convict had sprung a dark lantern, and as Edward entered, he saw him advancing toward a bed, the lantern in one hand, and a gleaming blade in the other. Intent on his murderous purpose, Ruyter was not conscious that his steps were followed, for he believed that the door below was firmly secured. Edward saw that the man's purpose was murder, and with noiseless steps drew near and stood over him ready to arrest his hand. The curtain of the bed was partly drawn aside, and Ruyter saw lying asleep in it the victim of his vengeance, and also, to his surprise, the beautiful face of a young girl. This discovery seemed to startle him, and lowering his knife, he gazed upon her with wonder. He feared also to do the murder he had contemplated, and stood deliberating. The young nobleman also saw the lovely sleeper by the light of the convict's lantern, and he let his eye dwell upon the sweet features with deep admiration. All at once Ruyter placed his knife and lantern upon the floor, and taking a cravat from his neck, muttered—

"This shall do it. The thing can be done quietly by passing this round her throat, and the girl not be awakened."

He twisted the handkerchief hard into a rope, and was bending over the unconscious sleeper, when Edward, with a quick movement over the head of the assassin, seized both ends of this twisted cravat, wrested it from his grasp, and with the rapidity of lightning, took a double turn with it round his neck; then drawing the ends together with a strong hand, he threw the astonished and alarmed convict backward upon the floor, and placed his foot upon his breast.

"Lie there, villain!" he cried, sternly, "and offer to move a muscle, and with your own knife I will strike you to the heart."

Alarmed by the fall, Madame De Ruyter and Cecilia both awoke in terror. Their consternation on seeing a man standing in the middle of the chamber, with his foot upon the body of another, nearly paralyzed them. Neither could give utterance to the cry that rose to their lips. A second glance told Cecilia that one of them was the handsome stranger, and deep blushes instantly chased away the paleness of fear, while instinctively she drew the curtain toward her to hide herself, yet filled with wonder and fear.

"Do not be alarmed," said the young man, in tones that at once inspired confidence in the breast of Madame De Ruyter, for Cecilia's fears were already vanishing at the sight of one of whom she was at the moment she awakened pleasantly dreaming; "this man I saw breaking into your house, and following him into this room, prevented him from doing murder. But for my providential interference in arresting his hand, you, madam, would have been the victim."

Both of the ladies shrieked, and Madame De Ruyter trembled with horror, as she recognized the dark features of her husband.

"It is well for you, madam," growled the assassin, "that this chap happened to be at hand, for I had sworn to take your life. That young girl, who I suppose is one of your brats, I would then have taken into my possession. Come, friend, your foot is rather heavy on my breast bone, and I don't like this cravat being quite so tight."

"Get to your feet, fellow, but I shall retain my grasp upon this handkerchief. Now come with me. When I am gone, ladies, you can secure the doors, and doubtless will meet no further interruption to-night. I did not speak to you, fair Cecilia, without cause, of dwelling in such a neighborhood."

"To-morrow we leave it, sir, for a better house," answered Madame De Ruyter.

"You should do so. Good-night, madame, and rest secure, for I will place a watchman in charge of the premises, for the remainder of the night. Good-night, my friend," he added, looking toward the blushing girl. "Now, fellow, come with me. The least attempt on your part to escape, will make your knife-point and heart's blood acquainted."

The young nobleman then led him out of the

chamber by a grasp upon the cravat and holding Ruyter's own knife in his other hand above his breast. The convict suffered himself to be led in this way in dogged silence to the street, where Edward gave him into the hands of two watchmen, who, hearing the noise, had hastened to the scene, and telling them the nature of his offense, told them to guard him with unwonted vigilance. Madame De Ruyter, from her window, saw this transfer to the custody of the watchmen, and felt relieved.

"He is now in security, Cecilia, and I need no longer tremble. I feared that he would seek my life. How providential my escape! Who could this brave young gentleman be? He called you by name. You must know him, dear."

"He is the one that gave me the forget-me-not, my dear mother," answered the girl, with grateful joy. "I tell you that now, because I feel, after what he has done, you will not censure me for loving him."

"No, never, my sweet child. But do you love him?"

"With all my heart, and now more than ever," she answered with fervent emotion.

"And this is why you cannot love my poor boy, who idolizes you. Well, dear child, I cannot help it now, only I pity Herman. Who is this young man?"

"Indeed, dear mother, I have never asked his name. I only know that he called himself Edward."

"Well, dear, I hope good will come of it. He has certainly shown himself a brave man, and looks like a perfect gentleman. I hope good will come of it. But then, was it not strange he should have been about here at this time of the night?"

"I do not know, mother," answered Cecilia, but feeling she could very truly guess.

There was some further conversation, during which Madame De Ruyter convinced herself that Herman had no place in the heart of her lovely protegee, and that he was rather feared than loved. She sighed for him, knowing well the violence of his character, and how fearfully the knowledge of this fact would affect him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE REWARD.

IT was about nine o'clock, the morning following, that Wilkins Wild was seated at a table in the tap room of the Saracen's Head, taking a cup of coffee and reading the morning's paper, which had just been thrown into the door by a news-boy. Plymp and Napes sat at the opposite side of the table smoking cigars.

"What news, captain?" asked the former, lighting a fresh cigar.

"I don't see anything. Ah—yes I do, though! Here is your chum in a fix, Napes?"

"What—Ruyter?"

"Yes. Here he is in the police report!"

"I'm glad of it," answered both burglars, venting their satisfaction in deep oaths.

"What has he done?" added Napes. "He went out after you left us, and I saw no more of him. Has he killed anybody?"

"Here is the account. I will read it," answered Wild, throwing himself back in his chair, with his feet thrown across the corner of the table.

"A villainous looking fellow, by the name of Ruyter, known as Sharp-knife among his fellows, was brought up for an attempt at murder. He was detected, by a gentleman, breaking into a house, where, but for him, he would have murdered a female in bed. This person arrested him in the very act of taking her life, and delivered him into the custody of the watchmen. This Ruyter was recently pardoned out of the State prison, where he was sentenced for life fourteen years ago, for a highway robbery and murder. The woman he attempted to murder was his wife before his incarceration. He was fully committed for trial, the gentleman who arrested him, and who we learn is Lord Edward Lessington, at present sojourning here, appearing against him, as well as Mrs. De Ruyter, whom the justice, at his lordship's request, sent for."

"Then Ruyter is fixed comfortably for the rest of his life," said Plymp. "I never liked the man. He was too fond of blood."

"Yes, we are peaceable pick-locks, and do no man any injury," answered Napes, with an air of self-satisfaction.

"Very innocent gentleman we are all, no doubt," remarked Wild, dryly. "So this villain has tried to kill his poor wife. It is well Herman was not the one who arrested him, for he would have taken his life, father or no father, on the spot. Where is Herman, dame?" asked Wild, laying down the paper and turning his head toward the bar.

"He went out early this morning. But come here, Wild; I have a word to say."

"Well, wife, what is it?" he asked, approaching her and leaning over the bar toward her.

"Have you been sounding Waldeigh's premises?"

"Yes. I was there by sunrise. I went as a brick-layer sent by the landlord to examine the

flues! I went all through the house. It was richly furnished, and I am confident old Waldeigh had Herman's money to do it with. I have all my plans arranged for having him your guest to-night, dame, provided we can't bring him to terms in his own house. He has but two servants besides a foot-boy, and only himself and sister. Napes and Plymp are to be my aids."

"Well, they will do if they can keep sober."

"They have both promised me to drink nothing stronger than coffee to-day."

"What hour have you fixed upon?"

"Eight o'clock."

"Ho, captain," called out Napes from the table, and holding the newspaper in his hand, "Here is a windfall for some lucky fellow if he gets it."

"What is it," carelessly inquired Wild, as he returned to his seat and resumed the position of his feet across the table.

"A bouncing reward offered."

"How much?"

"One thousand dollars?"

"One thousand?" repeated Wild. "Let me see the paper."

The burglar surrendered it, and Wild then read aloud:

"ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD!"

"The above reward will be paid to any person who will communicate any information concerning a little girl of ten years old, who mysteriously disappeared from the dwelling of Mr. Carrol, Washington Square, seven years ago this month. This child, if living, must be now seventeen years of age, with blue eyes, fair brown hair, and a delicate complexion. The above reward will be paid for such information as may lead to a knowledge of her fate, whether she be now living or dead. Apply to Parlor No. 10, Astor House!"

When the Burglar Captain had finished reading this advertisement, he compressed his lips and let his clenched hand fall with an emphasis upon the table till the wares upon it rung again.

"What? Do you know anything about this, captain?" asked Napes, eagerly.

"I'll wager an X he does," responded Plymp.

"Not I. I know nothing," he answered evasively. "I was only thinking what a capital haul that would be if I did know."

In a moment or two afterward, Wild got up, and in a lounging manner, wholly calculated to lull suspicion that this movement was owing to the advertisement, he went out of the tap. On gaining the street he walked rapidly in the direction of Madame De Ruyter's dwelling. As he went he thus gave utterance to his thoughts.

"I have it now. It is as clear as daylight.

That very girl Herman called his sister, is the original of the portrait I saw at Mr. Carrol's. That is why I have been so troubled with her face from the moment I saw her in the tap. I had recognized its resemblance to that portrait—that portrait which Herman, boy as he was, fell in love with from my description. There is no mistake. This young girl is just the age, too, that this child would be now. There is no doubt that Herman stole her off, and—ah! a new light breaks upon me. This girl was said, at the time, to have been seen to be taken into the carriage by a man, while a lad sprung up behind. This, then, will give me a clew to the mystery that hangs around Shears's death; for I well know Shears took off this young girl. The death of Shears, the disappearance of the girl and Herman, also, all at the same time, link the three events together; and now I know that this sister of Herman, is neither more nor less than the young girl that Shears carried off. How Herman mixed himself with the affair, I can't tell; but one thing is certain, his mother has the girl beneath her own roof. I will see him and have a talk with him. If what I suspect about Shears is true, Herman is in my power. Here is the house."

He ascended the stairs and knocked at the upper door. It was opened by Herman. He was in a state of great excitement, for his mother, who had just returned from the police court, where she had entered her complaint against her late husband, was relating the whole affair to him.

Herman had been in but a little while, early as he had risen; for he had met Cecilia at the street door as she was going to her rooms in Nassau street, to get them all ready to move into. On the way he poured out all his heart before her. On reaching the rooms she desired him to be seated, and calmly listen to her while she spoke with him. She then, in a gentle way, and with a sweet dignity becoming a maiden at such a crisis, told him that her regard for him was only sisterly, and that as a sister she loved him with great affection.

"More than this, Herman," she said, with a voice slightly tremulous, "I can never be to you."

We will not attempt to portray the scene of wild passion—pleadings, recriminations, and fearful wrath which this confession produced. During all, he did not ask her if she loved another, nor did she make this confession; for she feared for the life of him she loved.

"Well, be it so!" he said bitterly, after pouring out, not upon her, but upon himself the

bitterest denunciations for loving as he had done, and deceiving his heart.

"Be it so, Cecilia! From this time I am a reckless man—a man of blood! You know what my early career was, and that I turned from it that I might be worthy of your pure love. I sought honors and a good name, that I might lay them at your feet! I shunned temptation for your sake! I kept your image upon the altar of my heart and daily worshiped it there. Each day, by your power in me and over me, I grew better. I looked forward to happiness only in your presence. But—why—why—do I recapitulate these things? Why do I open my mouth? You are lost to me forever! Cruel, ungrateful! But I will not curse you. I love you, and I refrain from speaking the words of bitterness that rush from my crushed heart to my burning lips. Sister's love? Nay—I want no love but that love which answers to mine! I am sorry, Cecilia—I am sad and sorrowful—for I know that from this hour I have neither helm nor chart nor compass."

As he thus gave utterance to his emotion, he hastily left her, and rushed into the street. He sought his mother, and poured the tale of grief into her sympathizing ear. From her he first learned that she loved another! Who it was, he also learned from her; and when he was told it was he who had saved his mother's life, he buried his face in his hands; for he felt that he could not injure the life of the noble youth who had saved his mother's.

It was during this painful interview that Wild knocked at the door.

"Well!" said Herman, almost savagely. "Do you come for me to do crimes? If so, I am ready!" and he laughed so wildly that the Burglar Captain believed for a moment that he was insane.

"No, Herman, I have not come to get you to engage in any new affair; but to see you about an old one!"

"Well, what is it?"

"Can your mother leave the room a moment?"

"Go, mother! Now, we are alone! What would you with me?" he asked, gloomily.

"I have long wanted to ask you, Herman about the death of Shears!" and the Burglar Captain eyed him closely. "There have some circumstances lately come to light that lead me to believe who was the author of it?"

Herman colored deeply, and then became suddenly pale. This emotion confirmed Wild in his belief.

"Who do you suspect?" asked Herman.

"You?" answered Wild, firmly.

"Me?" answered Herman, starting from his chair.

"Yes, and you may as well confess it. But read that! and you will see that I know something more!" and he placed the newspaper he had brought with him, in his hand. He watched his countenance while he read it. Herman's hand trembled like a leaf as he finished the perusal. He looked up at Wild, with a look of alarm and suspicion.

"Well, what is this to me?" he asked, hoarsely.

"That you are not only in some way connected with the death of Shears, but that the young girl here described, is the very same I saw you protect from Napes and Plymp in the tap! I recognized her by the portrait I saw at Mr. Carrol's!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE DEATH-STRUGGLE.

HERMAN remained a few moments, after this bold charge from Wild, buried in deep and troubled thought. At length he raised his head, and fixing his eyes full upon him, said:

"Wilkins, you have guessed right. You are my friend, and I will tell you the whole story! He then went on to relate in detail the incidents as they had occurred.

When Herman had ended his recital, the events given in which have already been made known to the reader, the Burglar Captain started up with an exclamation of surprise and admiration.

"This, then, is the way Shears came to his end!" he at length said with deep emphasis.

"Well, I am glad this mystery is solved. I never had any thing perplex me so in my life as accounting for his death! Well, Herman, it was a bold deed, and like yourself! Now, what have you in view touching this young girl? It is plain that the one I saw you fight so bravely for in the tap at the 'Saracen,' and the one you rescued from Shears, are one and the same, although you have not yet acknowledged so much to me. You have read the advertisement. It describes her exactly. A thousand dollars isn't got every sunny morning!"

"What does your language mean?" demanded Herman, his brow darkening. "Do I understand you?"

"There is no use fooling the matter, Herman, between us. You acknowledge the young girl to be the same advertised here?"

"I do; what then?" he demanded haughtily.

"That we give her up and go shares, half and half in the reward!"

"Wild, are you in earnest?" he asked, in a tone fearfully subdued by his efforts to suppress his deep wrath.

"Yes, my boy!"

"So am I," thundered Herman. "Dare to think of carrying out this hellish plan of yours, and you shall die by my hand! This maiden has been reared and educated by my mother as my sister. Such she is to me, and as such I will protect her! Hear me—for now you have unmasked yourself—I will deal in plain words with you! By accident you have recognized this person to be the original of the picture you saw at Mr. Carroll's, and you are the only one that recognizes her to be the one sought for by those who penned this advertisement. Who they are, or why it was written, I know not, nor do I care. But this I say, that if you breathe a word of your knowledge to any living soul, I will be your murderer!"

"I do not fear your menaces, Herman," responded Wild, with a reckless laugh; and at the same time he began to move toward the door, with the inward purpose to hasten at once to the Astor House to give the information sought. But Herman divined his object, and placed himself between him and the door.

"By the Creator that made me, Wild, you shall not stir out of this room till you have sworn to keep silence touching this discovery you have made."

"Herman, this is going a little too far," cried Wild through his clenched teeth, his eyes glowing with rage. "Let me pass out for I swear to you I will take no oath of yours, or any other man's dictation."

"You will not?"

"No!" firmly answered the Burglar Captain, and with the utterance of the words he drew a pistol from his bosom, and cocking it, leveled it at Herman's heart. "Stand back and let me pass forth, or I pass across your body."

Quick as this act of the Burglar Captain had been, the motion of Herman's hand, with which he knocked the weapon from his grasp, was quicker. Flying into the air, it struck the ceiling and exploded, while the two men fiercely grappled with each other. Herman was struggling for the preservation of her whom he loved better than life, and he was resolved that Wild should not betray her existence to those who would take her from him forever! for he believed her parents were at length moving in this search after her, and well aware that she must be of a superior condition in life, he felt that her discovery by them would present forever a barrier to the union which, notwithstanding all his crushed hopes, he still trusted might be brought about according to his soul's desire; for true love never desponds.

The contest was short but terrific. After a little more than a minute from their first falling together on the floor, the young man rose to his feet, and wiping the red blood from a seaman's clasp-knife, he closed it and returned it to his pocket. The Burglar Captain moved not. He lay upon his back with his face upward. From his heart bubbled forth a torrent of blood, which formed a pool around him. His features were fixed, and his eyes glazed. He was dead!

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MAD RIVAL.

We left our heroine at the apartments which she had been furnishing for Madame De Ruyter, and where Herman had his unhappy interview with her. He returned as we have seen, to his mother's, where Wild called upon him, the fatal issue of which interview we have just seen. After Herman quitted Cecilia, she sat down and wept for him and for herself, that she should be the cause of his grief, for she felt grateful to him, and wished from her heart that she could requite his affection. As the hour was now close at hand when she should be at the shop, she dried her tears, and resuming her hat and shawl, she locked the neatly-arranged rooms, and tripped lightly away toward her place of daily duties.

On her way she was turned aside from her usual course by a crowd gathered around a small building on fire, and to avoid it she passed into the street in which the stall of Brant the bookman was situated. She had not yet got in sight of it, when Brant, who was seated in his dark box reading a newspaper, was startled by the sudden and abrupt appearance of Herman.

"Rolf, you are my friend. Let me conceal myself in your lodging-room. I have just slain the Burglar Captain, Wilkins Wild, and his body is fresh and bleeding in the door of my mother's house, and which is round the corner, beyond the Saracen's Head."

"You have saved the judge and hangman trouble if you have killed that villain," answered Rolf, with a smile of pleasure. "I liked him not, for he always had an insult for my deformity. Go in," he continued, throwing open the low door in the rear of his stall. "There you will be safe till some other place offers. Did any one see you do the deed?"

"No one."

"Then feel secure. I will shut you in, and by and by go up the street and see upon whom men fasten suspicion."

As the bookman turned the key in the door to his cell, for such the room in the rear of his stall may very properly be termed, he cast his eyes up and down the street, preparatory to going on

his mission. He suddenly started and his cheeks became flushed, while his eyes sparkled with intense emotion. Not ten steps from him, approaching the stall along the sidewalk, he beheld the lovely girl whom he had before seen accompanying Madame De Ruyter, and for whom he had then been seized with the most violent passion—a passion that changed his whole nature. A second time he had seen her walking alone, and as he passed her he sent forth his deep, burning glance into her eyes, and under his breath he whispered:

"For thy love, maiden, I would die. Deformed as I am—base and low as you see me, I have a soul that can appreciate your worth. Think of me sometimes, and do not despise the true heart which years has throbbled only with throes of sorrow, until the sight of your sweet countenance thrilled my veins with joy unutterable—and hopes high and daring seized upon my thoughts. Nay, tremble not. Fly me not. Pass on thy way, innocent and fair! I have spoken with thee, and I am happy. Go, but I feel within my soul's depths that you will never forget me."

And the bookman spoke truly. Though surprised and alarmed at being thus addressed in the street by a stranger of such a singular aspect, Cecilia listened to his words with a feeling akin to gentle pity, and, wondering, she went on her way; but she could not banish him from her mind. Her emotion when Herman alluded to him will be remembered by the reader.

In her haste to reach her shop Cecilia did not think of the bookman's stall being in her way; for since he had met her and spoken with her so strangely, she avoided the neighborhood of his dwelling. She first became conscious of being near him by seeing his dark eyes gazing upon her from beneath the shadowy arches of his brows. Instinctively she dropped her veil, and drawing it closely around her face, she averted her head and hurried by. As she left the stall behind her she almost flew.

"She fears and shuns me," he said, bitterly. "If I were shapely in person and fair in visage, she would have smiled upon me. But now, as I am, she avoids me as if I were a wild beast. She must learn to love me. I am hideous without; but I will make her so fall in love with my mind, that she shall love me. This passion I entertain for her is not awakened to perish without a purpose. Our destinies are interwoven by fate, or my heart would never have bounded to her footsteps as it has done. Fly, maiden, fly; but we shall meet again. She can be found at Herman's mother's, and her own. I will hie there now, and see what men say of this deed of blood."

As he spoke he left his stall, and took his way in the direction of the Saracen's Head. When he reached the tavern and turned the corner, he encountered a throng of people, who were gathered around the dwelling where Wild lay, having been drawn together by the outcries raised by Madame De Ruyter on returning to her room and discovering the murdered man upon her floor. Cecilia had seen the crowd, but had avoided it, being already late for her duties at the shop, and not knowing the object which had set it in motion. Rolf reached the scene, and listening to the numerous conjectures of the multitude, was satisfied that the true criminal was unsuspected. He then approached Madame De Ruyter, who was pacing up and down her room, wringing her hands, for she believed that Herman had done the murder, and she trembled lest she should each instant hear the cry given of his being arrested.

"Calm yourself, madame," said Rolf, in a low tone. "Your son is safe. Your grief will draw suspicion on you. Compose yourself, and Herman will be with you as soon as the momentary excitement passes. Where is your child?"

"My child? You said he was safe! Is he not in safety?" she asked, wildly.

"I mean your daughter."

"My daughter! Yes—oh, yes—did I say she was not my daughter, sir?" she asked, bewildered, and looking as if she feared she had unwittingly betrayed what she should have kept secret.

"No, you did not. Is she thy daughter?" asked the keenly watchful bookman.

"She is the only daughter I ever had."

"Madame, your answers are singular. You have made me suspect she is not your child. I never knew you had any other than Herman."

"Who is she then, if she be not my child?" asked Madame De Ruyter, with firmness, sensible of her danger.

"I know not," answered Rolf, turning away and mixing with the crowd, still strongly suspecting that the fair maiden was not the sister of Herman; for the young seaman, on first returning home, had inquired after and spoke of her with a tone more like that of a lover than a brother.

"Nevertheless," he said, as he walked slowly away toward his stall; "nevertheless, she may be his sister. Now that I know her abode, I will see her again, for my life is hid in hers."

"Well, Rolf?" said Herman, as the bookman unlocked his door and entered the little room in which he had left him.

"No one suspects you. You may venture abroad in safety."

"Thanks, good Brant. Did you see my mother?"

"Yes, and left her composed, after assuring her of your safety."

"Thanks again."

"Herman, you have a sister," said Rolf, in a tone full of emphasis and feeling.

"Well?" responded Herman, with surprise.

"I love her!" answered Brant, in a voice that came from the depths of his chest.

"Love her!" cried Herman, recoiling a step and fixing his eyes fiercely upon him.

"Yes, Herman, dearer than life I love her."

"Go on—what more?" demanded Herman, pale as marble, his lips compressed and his hand trembling, though clenched till the nails of the fingers met in the quick flesh of the palms.

"I mean to woo and win her. We are friends! I have money—I am rich! I ask your consent, and I—"

"Rolf—"

"Why do you falter, Herman?" asked the bookman, calmly.

"I will not falter, then! Know that my sister can never love thee, and that you shall never have my consent. Nay, by the Heaven above our heads, if you dare think of her again, I will—"

"Stop, Herman! I am satisfied now that she is not your sister?"

"Who is she then?"

"Ha!" gasped Brant. "Read that advertisement. It throws light upon bygone events I have long had my thoughts upon, and I believe that this maiden is the person here advertised, for you disappeared at the same time she did; and that very night I saw you from my stall in the storm, convey something into your mother's house, which, after I heard of the child's disappearance, I knew must have been a little girl. But I saw no more of you, and the subject escaped me. Now I find in your mother's house (and loved by you, for you cannot disguise it) a maiden who is neither her daughter, nor your sister, and who answers perfectly to the description of this advertisement. Read it!"

"I have read it, Brant," answered Herman, hoarsely. "Would you also claim the reward? Beware! It was for this I slew Wild."

"No. I desire no other reward than her young heart! Perish the money! I love her, and it shall be my part to keep her existence a secret from those who seek her. She must be mine and none other's!"

"Thine, accursed!" cried Herman, seizing him by the throat, fierce with rage, that he should dare to speak of love with reference to one he adored as he did his lovely-foster-sister.

"Herman, take off your hands! Goad me not to resentment!" shrieked the bookman.

"I will tear out thy foul tongue!"

"Forbear and unloose my throat, or I will kill thee!"

"Base spawn, I defy thee! To dare lift your thoughts to her! It is madness! Down, and grovel in the dust, hound!"

Herman, as he spoke, tried to press the head of the dwarf to the earth, so that he could place his foot upon his neck. But strong as he was, he miscalculated his own power, compared with that of the massive-shouldered bookman. With strong exertion of muscular strength, Rolf threw him from him, and then uttering a short, panther-like cry, he sprang upon him, and clasped his long, thin fingers about his neck. He then dashed his large head violently several times in rapid succession into his face, till the young man, suffocated and overpowered, fell backward heavily to the floor, where he lay as insensible as marble. The bookman drew from his bosom a slender *machete*, and, stooping over him, drove it to the hilt in his heart! Thrice he repeated the blow, and then getting up, he said, as he gazed upon him:

"There lies the only man who stood between me and happiness! Thus let him perish, who dares to be Rolf Brant's rival in love!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE DISCOVERY.

It was about half-past seven o'clock, the evening of the day on which these tragic events occurred, that Lord Delorme and his sister, Lady Lessington, were seated at the tea-table in their rooms at the Astor. They were speaking of the extraordinary series of circumstances by which they had obtained intelligence of the lost child up to her disappearance from the house of Mr. Carroll, and were sadly discussing the hopeless chances that they should ever hear of her again.

"What can Edward have meant," said Lady Lessington, "by his wild words just now, and rising from the table, and rushing out as he did so like a madman, crying, 'I have it! I have it!'"

"I can't explain his conduct. But all day he has had something in his thoughts perplexing; and once I heard him say, to himself, 'The face of that child's portrait haunts me with a vague resemblance to some one, and each instant I would fix upon the person the connecting link I sought doth vanish!'"

"It would be extraordinary if Edward had by chance met with her somewhere, and now traces the resemblance! Perhaps his sudden departure from the table, and his words had something to do with the fastening this resemblance upon the person whose image has been vaguely seen in his mind."

They were right in their conjectures. Lord Edward had again and again that day gazed upon the portrait of the lovely child which was in Lord Delorme's possession, and the more he gazed the more certain he felt that he had somewhere seen the face! But suddenly the truth flashed upon his mind at a moment, when he had the portrait and the face of the lovely girl at the same instant in his mind. The face answered to the face as in a mirror, and their identity was clear, and decided.

He hastened from the hotel to the store and not finding her there, in an assumed careless tone inquired for her of the proprietor. From him he understood that she had gone to her mother's, having been sent for on account of her sudden illness. The scenes she had gone through that day had deeply affected that lady, and when she sent for Cecilia to see her she was near her end. Of the murder of Herman she had not heard, for the Book-man having done the deed in secret took care to remove the body and all traces of the act of blood from his dark and solitary abode.

On reaching the dwelling of Madam De Ruyter, Lord Edward ascended the stairs and entered the room. Upon the bed lay the dying woman. Over her, bent weeping, the lovely girl he sought. The young nobleman advanced with sympathy in his looks, and knelt by the side of the bed with an air of respectful sorrow. Cecilia on seeing him blushed deeply, and would have risen, but he said to her:

"Do not move. Let us together watch her last moments!"

"It is the noble youth! Ah, sir, Heaven has sent you," said the dying woman with a faint articulation. "You are good and honorable, for I see these sentiments in your countenance. You are her only protector under God. To you I solemnly commit her!"

"I take the trust which you confide to me, in truth and sincerity, my dear madam!" answered Lord Edward, with emotion. "Tell me, then, truly, is she your daughter?"

"No—no! I have deceived full long! Do not tremble, Cecilia! The knowledge of the truth will not now affect you. You need not now fear exposure with being the murderer of that man Shears, which alone has so long intimidated you! A burglar in breaking into the house of Mr. Carrol, not finding booty, seized upon her, believing her to be his child, hoping to get a large ransom for her. My son slew him and rescued the child, whom, boy as he was, he loved, and conveyed her to my house. Then, at his urgent desire, I connived at the concealment of the sweet child, whom he resolved never to part from. She was prevented from making known who she was by the subtlety of Herman, who excited her apprehensions with the idea that she would be arrested as the murderer of the man who carried her off, he being killed by Herman—in her presence! If I have done wrong, God knows I have repented it!"

"You have doubtless done wickedly, madam," said the young man. "But Providence has directed these things to a termination you little anticipated. I will tell you what will relieve your mind at this solemn hour. Here is an advertisement," he continued, taking a paper from his pocket, "which please listen to."

When he had ended reading it, the poor woman clasped her hands together in deep emotion.

"Oh, sir, do her parents live?"

"Yes—her father. He is now in this city. He is an English nobleman, and my uncle. Satisfied that this lovely girl was her we sought, I came here to question her as to her early recollections. Your words have left no room for doubt. This young girl is my cousin, and to my mother, who is in the city, I shall at once consign her. You see, therefore, that she will not be without suitable protectors."

Madam De Ruyter extended her arms with an expression of deep joy upon her pale countenance, to embrace Cecilia, and then pressing the hand of the young nobleman, she said fervently:

"Now do I die in peace!"

A short while more and the spirit of Madam De Ruyter had taken its flight.

The surprise and joy of the young maiden on hearing the words of Lord Edward, were at once lost in the deep grief with which the loss of her dear friend and foster-mother overwhelmed her. At length, soothed by her noble cousin, and feeling that all she had heard him say was a dream, she suffered him to conduct her to a carriage, which he had called to as it was going by, and conveyed her to his mother and her father.

The scene that passed on the entrance of Lord Edward with the lovely girl, whose features clearly spoke her claim to her noble birthright, cannot be described. She gave her happy father her whole story, while Lord Edward sat by her, listening with a deep and tender interest,

and perfectly happy that he could now make his wife her, to whom, in a humble station, he had lost his heart.

After some discussion as to the best mode of proceeding, now that she was once more in their possession, it was decided unanimously that there should be nothing said to the proprietor of the cigar-mart, nor to any person whatsoever touching this discovery of her birth; but that she should leave with them early the next day for Boston, and at once proceed with them to England. The motive of this secrecy was to spare her own feelings, as well as those of her father, in her new position, by protecting her from any allusion to her late situation as a cigar-girl; it being deemed best that this precaution should be made to guard her against any reproach that might follow her into the new life before her.

The next day, therefore, the whole party left for Boston, and two days afterward took the packet for England. The mystery that involved her sudden disappearance, and the excitement it produced in New York, is already familiar to the reader. Three years of careful tutelage under the best tutors and governesses, completed her education, and in her twentieth year Lord Edward led her to the altar, where all joined in confessing her to be the loveliest and most accomplished bride that had for years graced the nuptial records of any of the British aristocracy.

Brant the Book-man, who had never been suspected of murdering Herman, who, indeed, had not been missed, had carefully concealed his body, until one night he bore it to the river and threw it in to sink from human gaze forever. And, not believing in the death of the lovely girl, he used every means, and expended much, to ascertain where she was, but without success. At length, after she had been absent a little more than three years, he believed he had got a trace of her, which was very favorable; for in a few days after he sailed for England, since when the vessel has never been heard of in which he took passage.

And Isabel, the Fallen Star, or as she was better known, Dirk Dilley, grew rich at The Saracen, but her duties as proprietress would not drive from her thoughts the man who had won her first love, even though he had wrecked her life, and the face of the Burglar Captain ever haunting by night and day, along with the phantom memories of her evil deeds, she became crazed, ere Wild had been two years in his grave; but death would not come to her relief, and she still lives, a snowy-haired old woman, the inmate of a mad-house, in which the star of her strange life has set forever.

THE END.

The Fireside Library.

- 1 WAS SHE HIS WIFE? By Mrs. Mary Reed Crowell.
- 2 FLEEING FROM LOVE. By Harriet Irving.
- 3 DID HE LOVE HER? By Bartley T. Campbell.
- 4 A STRANGE WOMAN. By Rett Winwood.
- 5 TWO GIRLS' LIVES. By Mrs. Mary Reed Crowell.
- 6 THE WAR OF HEARTS. By Corinne Cushman.
- 11 THE FALSE WIDOW. By Mrs. Jennie D. Burton.
- 12-13 LOST FOR LOVE. By Miss M. E. Braddon.
- 14-15 TOILERS OF THE SEA. By Victor Hugo.
- 16 THE QUADROON. By Catharine A. Warfield.
- 17-18 UNCLE SILAS. By J. S. Le Fanu.
- 19-20 DEAD-SEA FRUIT. By Miss M. E. Braddon.
- 21-22 LITTLE KATE KIRBY. By F. W. Robinson.
- 23 SOWING THE WIND. By Mrs. Mary Reed Crowell.
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